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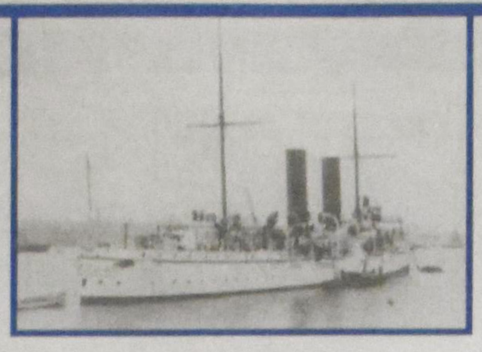

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NOV 15 2011

A new generation of giving

Bethany Van Lingen

It's rare to use a cell phone to talk these days. Instead, Canadians are using their cell phones to search the internet, send messages and, increasingly, donate to charity.

This is the topic on the minds of non-profit organizations and mobile media companies as they consider how to draw in a new generation of donors.

Mobile technology is little used by Canadian charities, although there is a large unreached market of people with cell phones. Of 10,000 registered charities, only 125 in Canada use text-to-give fundraising and only 50 percent of mobile users are aware that they can donate through text messaging, says Katherine Winchester, administrator at the Mobile Giving Foundation of Canada.

Cell phones present churches with a range of opportunities, especially when it comes to giving.

The simplest form of mobile giving is known as text-to-give, in which donors text a keyword to a five digit number in order to donate five or 10 dollars to a cause. Text message giving gained momentum in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti on January 10 of last year.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) began a text-to-give fundraising campaign after the earthquake but later scrapped the program because of its costs, says Christina DeJong, 42, of Burlington, Ontario. DeJong is the web and e-communications specialist for the CRWRC.

To make text message campaigns worth the investment, Winchester says, charities need to combine text messaging with the rest of their fundraising program.

"You can reach a whole new generation of donors, who are 18 to 34. These are people who are online and on their phones all the time. So, if a non-profit can place calls to action strategically on their website and as advertisements on sites like YouTube, they can reach a whole bunch of people they could have never contacted through mail or by radio," says Winchester, 26, of Ottawa.

With text-to-give, charities can see in real-time how many text donations they are receiving. The technology is also cost-effective.

"For every 10 dollars we receive from a donor, we are only losing 50 cents in operating costs," says Shirley Roy, 44, of Ottawa. Roy is the community and media relations officer at Ottawa Mission.

Although the operating costs are low for text-to-give fundraising, charities are limited as to how much they can ask from donors. Donations are quite small with the only options being to give five or

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In some churches ... the pastor will ask a question during the sermon and then a poll will be taken of the response of the congregation [using mobile phones].

Problem gambling and the church

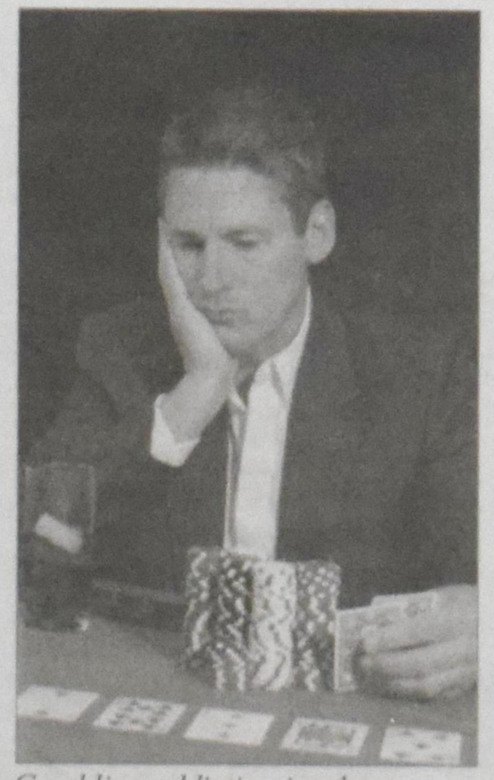
Meagan Gillmore

It began with a love of the game, well, many games.

"I have a very big passion for sports," explains Jon Lee (not his real name). Throughout high school Lee played badminton, volleyball and basketball. But during his first year of university, he took up a new game: gambling.

It started simply enough, a $25 or $50 wager on a game's outcome. It made watching sports more exciting. But this action lasted long after the final whistle, and the score was more difficult to calculate.

"Once you win, you keep betting more," Lee, age 24, remembers. So he did – hoping to gain more or make up losses. One summer he won close to five figures. When he won, he could bet more – increasing the amounts five or 10 times. Lee estimates that, at most, he bet $20,000 or $30,000 a week, maybe more. The losses grew.



Gambling addiction is a huge problem in our society, but doesn't always get recognized as such.

"I'd be living like a roller coaster day by day," he remembers.

But it wasn't fun, and it influenced every part of his life. Lee experienced constant worry about money and how to get it. He wanted to fix things, but couldn't figure out how.

A serious problem

Not everyone who gambles will develop a problem or addiction, and when compared to other potentially addictive behaviours gambling can appear less damaging. But for some people gambling can be a difficult trap to get out of. As Alex Kwee, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Trinity Western University who treats individuals with addictions and has served as a consultant for responsible gaming initiatives in the United States, explains, gambling does have some logic behind it. Gambling can cause financial problems, so winning holds the possibility of relieving those problems. As Kwee suggests, "The same cannot be said of other addictions – drinking or using more cocaine clearly is not the solution to anything."

The Canadian Association of Mental Health (CAMH) defines gambling as a problem when it interferes with an individual's work or school activities, causes financial harm, damages someone's reputation, causes problems with family or friends or harms one's mental or physical health. While studies suggest men

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Giving *continued*

ten dollars. Mobile companies are unwilling to offer larger automatic donation amounts. The money given is processed through a donor's mobile bill. But, weeks later, when their mobile bill arrives, the donor will have forgotten about the money they set aside by text message for charity. Mobile companies do not want to deal with customer complaints from those who donated and forgot or who want a refund. So, cell phone companies limit the amount of money charities can ask for from donors.

Reed Baker, CEO at Sophist Productions, has discovered a way to bypass these problems and make mobile giving a medium for donations of thousands of dollars. Baker's creation, called text-to-pledge, allows donors to make large gifts to charities while attending a gala hosted by the charity. The amount of money given and a message

Sophist's text-to-pledge software has made more than $10 million for charity.

from the donor is then projected onto a screen for all at the gala to see.

The attendees of these galas are 40 to 60 years old, but most are comfortable with cell phone technology, says Baker, 31, of Queens, New York.

Sophist has made over $10 million for charity since the text-to-pledge program began in 2007. But the focus of text-to-pledge is not the same as text-to-give, where charities try to get their message out to the largest number of people possible.

Instead, Sophist looks for non-profits that have created relationships with donors able to make large contributions to the work the non-profits are doing. Baker's company is not able to help non-profits with small budgets or churches who seek to use mobile technology to reach their congregations.

Through MobileCause, churches have also been able to use mobile technology. In some churches, says Doug Plank, founder and CEO of MobileCause, the pastor will ask a question during the sermon and then a poll will be taken of the responses of the congregation. Others send out daily devotionals to their members' cell phones. Or, finally, members in some churches can send their weekly tithe of five or 10 dollars through their cell phone, if they've forgotten their chequebook.

"I always say to churches, 'Forgive my brashness,'" Douglas Plank, 54, of California says, "but you are mobile whether you like it or not. The question is whether you are going to control it or are you going to let someone else control it for you."

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Gambling *continued*

are more likely to gamble than women, women are more likely to seek treatment. People gamble for various reasons: to escape boredom, find thrills or supplement a low or unstable income. A 2009 study reported three percent of Canadians 19 or older are severe to moderate problem gamblers. This adds up to approximately 828,000 people who – at least at times – struggle to control their gambling. A 2010 CAMH study found 29,000 students in Ontario from Grades 7 to 12 engage in behaviour that indicates problem gambling, so the problem isn't limited to adults.

As serious as these numbers are, Derek Miedema, a Communications Coordinator and Researcher with the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, believes they grossly underestimate the situation. He cites an Australian study that found each problem gambler negatively affects, on average, five to 10 people. By this calculation, problem gambling negatively affects between 4.1 and 8.28 million Canadians.

"It's not possible anymore to say that problem gambling is a tiny issue because only three percent of people are problem gamblers," he explains. "If it's affecting anywhere between 12 and 25 percent of the population of Canada, it's not a small issue."

Mixed messages

Fixing the problem of gambling addiction raises other issues. Governments profit from gambling, while at the same time encouraging problem gamblers to seek help. "If they're not going to get right out of it, than they need to separate . . . that part of the lottery corporations that say 'More, more, more profits,' from the part of it that are saying, 'Problem gambler, stop gambling,'" Miedema, who published a report on gambling and families in October 2010, explains. "Because those two don't go together."

In 2009, net revenue from all government-run lotteries, video lottery terminals (VLTs), casinos and slot machines not in casinos totalled $13.75 billion. In Ontario alone, gambling revenue was $4.7 billion. The Ontario Government receives 20 percent of gross gaming revenue from OLG resort casinos and all net profit from Caesars Windsor, Casino Niagara and Niagara Fallsview. Net revenues from Casino Rama are distributed throughout Ontario First Nations communities. "Governments are addicted to gambling revenues," Miedema says.

While the financial gains of gambling can be calculated, the social costs cannot. Problem gambling can lead to family breakdown on various levels: divorce, bankruptcy, damaged relationships that lead to other problems, etc.

At the root of gambling lies a belief that money brings happiness. Miedema sees this as stemming from a lack of contentment, while Kwee describes it as idolatry. "At the spiritual level, addiction is the culmination of submission to something that holds the promise of comfort. Initially, that submission is volitional, but the process ends in its dominance over the

While the financial gains of gambling can be calculated, the social costs cannot.

Governments have become addicted to gambling revenues.

addict through a combination of volitional abuse and biological forces." Kwee sees the connections between mind, emotions, biology and actions as testimony of Scripture's teaching that humans are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Christian support

One day Lee's doorbell rang, and someone was there demanding money. This was when his gambling problem became bigger than himself. His family found out, and in the first instance helped him out. But when it happened again Lee noticed the stress he was causing his family.

A family doctor referred Lee's parents to Christian Aid and Relational Evangelism Inc. (CARE), a charity primarily serving the Chinese-Canadian community. Lee and his family came to Canada from Hong Kong when he was a child, so this was a good fit. Founded in 1989, CARE's ministry is focussed on the imprisoned, the blind or visually impaired, people with physical handicaps, street prostitutes and those with gambling addictions. Executive Director Pastor Victor Chan has been involved with CARE's ministry to gamblers since it began in 2005. Gambling is common entertainment in Hong Kong says Chan, "almost like going to a movie, or going for a drink." (Kwee, who also focuses on ethnic minority counselling, believes that a fascination with numerology, luck and symbols may explain why gambling can be more prevalent in some East Asian groups.)

Every Monday, a CARE group meets to sing, study the Bible and to share personal testimonies. Jon Lee began attending in August 2010. After he started attending, he started believing in Christ. Lee's entire family now attends Pastor Chan's church, and he and his mother plan to be baptized this Christmas. Lee is making new friends at church, and spending more time with his family and less time focused on himself. He's also completing his final year of university after working for the last year.

But he admits choosing not to gamble is still difficult. He still feels the desire sometimes. "It's really God's working. I do have an urge to, but I can sense something pulling me from it."

He draws strength from knowing that Jesus can soften any heart. "Now I know I have to rely on God and put everything in his hands."

Meagan Gillmore graduated in June 2011 with high distinction from the Brantford campus of Wilfrid Laurier University with an undergraduate degree in English and Journalism. She was awarded the 2011 David S. Barr Award in the college division from The Newspaper Guild – Communications Workers of America. Currently, she lives in Hamilton, Ontario where she writes for different publications and not-for-profit organizations.

Column

Remembering

Mary VanderVennen

We have recently come through weeks of remembering 9/11. During the first week of November we observed Holocaust Remembrance week, and on Nov. 11 we celebrated Remembrance Day. We are told again and again that we must remember, we must never forget. Remembering seems to have acquired increasing importance in our times.

That's a good thing. Too often events in our personal lives or in the lives of those we are connected to are simply not talked about, or avoided as being too painful to remember. And we try, usually unsuccessfully, to forget.

But what does remembering mean? Do we just recycle the events with whatever memories and emotions they evoke, and then go on, having performed that ritual one more time? How do we remember? Why do we remember? Why should we remember? Are there unhelpful ways of remembering?

The theologian Miroslav Volf in his provocative book *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* speaks to the question "How should we remember events in our own lives or in the broader community?" He writes partly out of his own experience of persecution in the former Yugoslavia, but his focus is mainly theological.

Volf points out that in the Bible there are only two events we are commanded to remember. One is the Exodus. The other is the passion and death of Jesus Christ, symbolized in the Lord's Supper. Both events are stories of suffering and deliverance or redemption.

Both events also have a past, a present and a future orientation. It is not enough, God says, simply to remember and honor the Exodus as something that happened in the past. "You are to love the aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt," God says in Deuteronomy. The Israelites are to treat their slaves humanely and free them at certain intervals "for you yourselves were slaves in Egypt and delivered by my outstretched arm." In other words, remembering their suffering and deliverance from Egypt is the basis for how the Israelites are to live their lives in the present and future.

The past, present and future orientations are even more pronounced as we remember Christ's suffering, death and resurrection in the Lord's Supper. We remember the Exodus, as the Supper has its roots in the Passover. We remember Christ's suffering as we eat the bread and drink the wine, and we live lives of gratitude for our salvation. And we look forward as Christ's death and resurrection is the guarantee of a future free from pain and grief. Furthermore, the Passion provides the basis for reconciliation between enemies, as God in Christ reconciles the world to himself.

In our personal lives it is difficult to remember suffering and redemption simultaneously. It is much too easy to emphasize or minimize one or the other, and often the redemption is not immediately apparent. After all, the Israelites waited 400 years for their deliverance. But "remembering redemptively," one of Volf's favorite phrases, requires us to remember both. Perhaps the increasing number of stories of selflessness and generosity immediately after 9/11 are the beginnings of redemptive memory of that event. Perhaps the plan to build a mosque near Ground Zero was an attempt at reconciliation and as such is redemptive.

When we remember 9/11, stand at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day or reflect on more personal traumas in our lives, are we remembering only pain and suffering? Or are we living our lives differently because we look at these events through the lens of Christ's suffering and resurrection? Only that kind of remembrance gives the basis for hope, for working toward a future when God's kingdom is all in all, and there is no more suffering and no more enmity between people.

Mary VanderVennen is a retired psychotherapist, formerly with Christian Counseling Services in Toronto. She is a member of Grace CRC in Scarborough.

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Occupy politics

For the past few weeks there have been protests all around the world. Young people, middle class people, poor people and students have come together to draw attention to an undeniable inequality: just one percent of people control the bulk of all wealth and power. Now, I don't want to talk about the protestors' motives, arguments or tactics. I just want to point out an irony that's been bugging me.

Just weeks before the "Occupy Toronto" protest began, we had a provincial election in Ontario. Only 49.2 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast a ballot. Despite the advertising from Elections Ontario, the cajoling from politicians of all stripes and the firehose blast of social media reminders, Ontario had a record-low voter turnout. For weeks, the entire apparatus of our democracy was begging people to participate and pay attention. Yet, a few weeks later, people took to the streets claiming they were being ignored by the system.

So what's going on here? Have people tuned democracy out because it's not working for them? Have they tuned it out because they feel it's too complex to participate in? Are they saying that protests are a more effective means of getting their message out? Or are they just, simply, cynical?

It's this last point that I want to address – because cynicism about politics seems pretty universal. I've heard lots of people say the same thing: "All politicians are corrupt. You can't trust any of them." And if you can't trust politicians, then you can't trust politics. Which means democracy is a sham. That's what people tell themselves, at least.

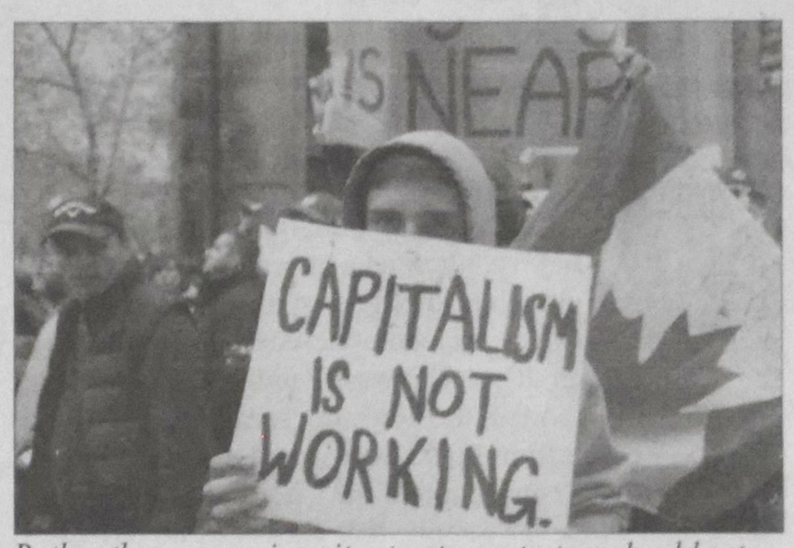
My story

I see it very differently. Let me tell you my story. My parents were immigrants. Between them, they never made more than $50,000 a year. I grew up in Dunnville, Ontario – not exactly the epicentre of power and influence. I was never at the top of my class, nor at the bottom, just comfortably in the middle with the rest of the vast, scholastic herd. I was never athletic. I never travelled much. I have been, as far as I can tell, the social, economic and academic equivalent of apple pie: plain, average and unremarkable. A few years into a pretty average teaching career, I decided I wanted to do something else. I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted it to be "meaningful" – whatever that meant.

Eventually, I was interviewed and hired by the Government of Ontario. That was 11 years ago. Since then, I've worked for the people of Ontario through three different Premiers, in several different roles and a couple of different offices. I think I've been able to do some good and meaningful work over the years. But, more importantly, I've been able to work with lots of different people who came to politics and government for lots of different reasons. And here's what you need to know about the elected officials, political staffers and government workers I have known:

- Most of them come from working class backgrounds, just like you and me.
- They're hard-working and talented. Most of them could work anywhere – and make more money elsewhere – but they choose to serve in politics.
- They're there for the right reasons. They love their families and want to do the right thing for the families of the people they serve.
- They're inspiring. They are genuinely compassionate, intelligent, caring people.

A friend of mine was a political staffer for nearly thirty years. His advice to me: "Stay in this job as long as you can. It's the best job in the world. It lets you make a difference." He wasn't cynical. Not even after 30 years of working long hours in governments all over the country. Because he was right: if you want to make a difference, change the world, make people's lives better, the best way to do that is to roll up your sleeves, get involved and get political. Because you can make a difference. Anyone can. I've seen it happen. And I – and so many others – are proof that you don't need to be connected or especially brilliant or wealthy to have influence. All you need is a heart that desires to serve, and the willingness to take a risk.



Rather than occupying city streets, protestors should get involved in the political process.

A challenge

So to the people occupying the streets and those who stay home instead of voting, I have this challenge: Occupy politics. Putting a slogan on a sign is a good start. Now, put your name on a sign and on a ballot. Thinking about politics, reading the paper, and having an opinion is important. Now, get off the couch and volunteer in a constituency office. And vote. Believe me, our democracy has lots of room for people just like you. In fact, it needs you. It needs your time, your talents and your enthusiasm.

There's lots of work to do to make sure our hospitals, schools and social services are there to serve the people who need them. There are lots of opportunities to make a difference, right in your community. And once you take that step – once you get off the couch or out of the street and really get involved – you'll see that the people you met along the way will inspire you, challenge you and cure you, once and for all, of cynicism.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ontario.

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Editorials

The Desert Fathers and Mothers

Brian Bork

I think it's fair to say that many Protestants have an understanding of Church history that's fairly lacking. It's a suspicion that's confirmed when I talk with my students, many of whom have been raised in the CRC. They've inherited a general sense that the continuum of church history goes something like this: Jesus – the Apostles – a load of heretics – Martin Luther and John Calvin. It's as if it wasn't until the Reformation that things got sorted, theologically speaking. Sometimes we don't even affirm that; I've encountered plenty of folks who've a conception of the Church – where it's been, and where it's going – that goes back no farther than some Willow Creek pamphlet from the 90s.

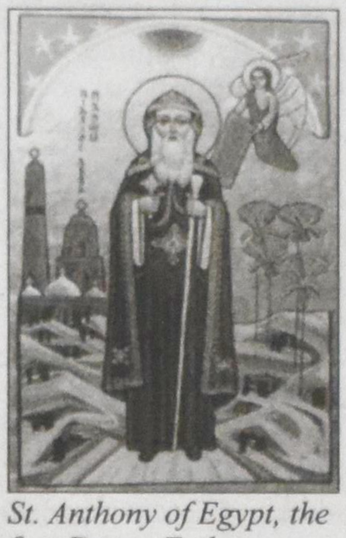
I know, I know: life is busy. Few of us have the luxury of contemplating the arcane and dusty theological tomes that history's bequeathed us. Some days, it's all we can do to eek out a brief tweet of a prayer in the drizzle at the bus stop, or perched over the dinner plate. Nonetheless, I think that cultivating a familiarity with church history is *vital* for a life of faith. Not because it's important to gorge ourselves on esoteric facts about the past, but because when we awaken to the unfathomably rich, textured story in which we dwell, our faith *comes alive*. To explore this history is to dwell in the communion of saints; wisdom, experience and profound devotion abound in the lives of those who've gone before us.

Recently, my own journey through Christian history has taken me back, a millennia and a half, to the wastes of Egypt, somewhere out beyond the damp ribbon of the Nile. Beginning in the late third century, a group of Christian men and women fled from Mediterranean cities to the desert, living as hermits or in small communities. We call these people the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They are the first monks and nuns in the Christian tradition and, perhaps more significantly, they are our sisters and brothers. They set the bar for the rest of us, and we have much to learn from them.

Into the desert

It begins with a man named Anthony, who, one morning during liturgy, heard the Gospel read from Matthew: "*go, sell your possessions and give to the poor … then come, follow me.*" He did just that, and moved out into the wilderness.

Anthony, along with many others, had become alarmed by the way Christianity was cozying up with the Roman Empire. Until the late third century being a Christian in those parts was a dicey proposition, but the relationship between the Church and empire had started to relax. There were fewer martyrs (arguably a good thing), but it also meant that standards dropped, and Christianity became contaminated and compromised by the interests of empire.



St. Anthony of Egypt, the first Desert Father.

The desert was, for Anthony and the others, a retreat from all this, but not of the indulgent "Eat, Pray, Love" variety. It was a place of spiritual revolution. The desert stripped away all pretensions and self-justification. It put you alone with your innermost self, away from all distractions and the choirs of voices that rationalized a life lived contrary to the Gospel. It was also the ecological niche of demons, both the kind that come from within and the kind that crouch at your door. Life in the desert was composed of intense prayer, deep and lasting silence, and spiritual wrestling.

The primary record that's been left to us from these Desert monastics is their collected sayings, aphorisms, brief stories and koan-like bits of wisdom. Sometimes direct, oftentimes rather obscure, they're all theologically potent – sufficiently so that Augustine claimed to be "set on fire" by the story of Anthony.

Desert as a state of being

As I write this, it's a cold, rainy afternoon in late October. I feel a long way from the Egyptian desert. We might all feel that way as we read about these Fathers and Mothers. There's something very strange and foreign about their lives; monastic devotion and asceticism are, I would argue, scandalous to our frenetic, consumerist culture. I'd contend that it's also quite foreign to our Reformed communities, where we have a work ethic that prizes busyness, a habit the Desert Fathers equated with moral laziness.

The thing about the desert, though, is that it's not just a far away place. It's also a state of being. If you've experienced loneliness, desolation or brokenness, you've been to the desert. And you might recall, while you were there, the intense desire for solidarity in the struggle. The Desert Fathers and Mothers are the worthiest of companions for the journey.

Over the coming months I hope to explore the Desert Fathers and Mothers with you in these pages. I can't write about them with the authority of an expert, or with any special credentials in tow. I write as an enthusiastic amateur (a good term to describe my life as a Christian in general). I'm hoping to take a saying, an aphorism, or a story, and reflect on it – not in an effort to make the Fathers and Mothers "relevant" for today, but in the hopes of scrutinizing our day from the perspective of their ancient wisdom. Please stay tuned for more.

Brian Bork is the CRC chaplain at the University of Waterloo, where he's trying his best to get all these mathematicians and engineers to think theologically. In his spare time he enjoys the rise in blood pressure he gets from hearing the Kop End sing "You'll Never Walk Alone."

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Nevermind, 20 years later

Michael Buma

It's only teenage wasteland
– The Who, "Baba O'Riley"

September marked the 20th anniversary of Nirvana's monumental second album, *Nevermind*, a milestone that (as Pitchforkmedia pointed out in their coverage) made many 30-somethings like me feel old. *Nevermind* has often been credited for bringing "grunge," the signature Seattle sound from the late 1980s and early 90s, into the mainstream. Despite its jungle of fuzzy electric guitar, pounding drums and incomprehensible screaming vocals, *Nevermind* managed to sell more than 30 million albums and displace Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* from the top of the Billboard charts – no small feat.

On the occasion of the *Nevermind* anniversary, I wiped the dust off my old CD – haven't used one of those in a while! – and listened to the album for the first time in years. Some thoughts: Dave Grohl is a pretty good drummer (and considering his post-Nirvana accomplishments with the Foo Fighters, something of a musical polymath), and Kurt Cobain had a remarkable ability to scream on key. But *Nevermind* simply didn't move me the way it used to.

Nevermind was an album that meant *a lot* to me in my early years of high school. It was loud and brash, suspicious of authority and somehow passively angry. The lyrics didn't make much sense, but at the time seemed beautiful and evocative. They pointed to a world of adolescent feelings that were sharpening into focus for me, became the words I couldn't find on my own to describe the uncertainty, awkwardness and pressure I was experiencing. When Kurt sang about "feel[ing] stupid and contagious," it was like he understood all my uncertainties and insecurities. When he went on to scream "here we are now, entertain us" that made sense too: I wanted to play video games rather than do homework, watch television instead of reading novels. Even *Nevermind*'s cover art struck me as profound, a picture of a baby swimming underwater after a fish-hook baited with a dollar bill. Of course! Capitalism steals our childhood innocence!

But most of all, I think, I wanted to be cool. Kurt looked cool, with his tattered sweaters and greasy long hair constantly in his face. He celebrated weakness in a way that made it seem okay to be weak. Although he'd never have called it this, Kurt Cobain knew depravity through and through. He was a fallen human being who was thoroughly aware of his fallenness. In fact, it seems to me that he achieved a level of openness and honesty about his spiritual inadequacy that even the most diehard Calvinists rarely do. But Kurt remained mired in his fallenness. He knew he needed to be redeemed, but had no idea how.

Teenage wasteland

I.A. Richards once suggested that T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* – the definitive poetic articulation of modernist angst and despair – represents a state of mind through which all contemplative young people must pass. Along with the work of other bands such as Pearl Jam and The Smashing Pumpkins, *Nevermind* was my wasteland. (Until, that is, I read *The Waste Land* itself, which expressed what was left of these emotions in a way that actually is profound, sustained and poetic).

The wasteland period in a thoughtful teenager's life can be tricky. There's potential here to go too far off the rails, to get into serious trouble of one sort or another. It's a period that I think

Letters

Creation versus evolution not an either-or question

I am writing in response to Dr. Chiang's article on the theory of evolution and its clash with the creation story (*CC*, Oct. 10). I believe we're not all that far apart, but I would like to add a few "unscientific" thoughts. At university, some 50 years ago for me, I studied geology and spent the earliest part of my work-life engaged in mineral exploration and mine development as a geologic engineer. I was of course confronted with evolution, not only in the formation of life on this planet as can be deducted from the fossil record in sedimentary rock types, but also in the age of the earth, as established with rock-dating techniques. I learned to deal with the glaring contradictions between Biblical revelation and what the scientific "facts" try to tell us by realizing that as human beings we don't have to act as if we know everything, much as we might like it to be so. Even with the best scientific spectacles available to us, our vision of the past is limited. Therefore, for me it doesn't boil down to an either-or question, creation or evolution. I think the two can exist side-by-side.

What God has wrought and revealed to us can be usefully enlightened by what we are learning scientifically about his creation. However, that is not possible when we see creation or evolution as absolutes, pitting one against the other. It's my guess that were we to know everything (which I repeat, we don't), the creation fact would harmonize with what has followed since and with what we have been enabled to discover in nature. In the meantime, we should stop the all-or-none, one-or-the-other debate. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Ed Grootenboer
Waterloo, Ont.

RCA the oldest denomination

Marian Van Til writes about the Southern Baptist Convention's consideration of a name change in her article "U.S.: Largest Protestant church considers a name change" (*CC*, Oct. 10). She identifies the Southern Baptist Convention as "America's oldest and largest Protestant denomination (founded in 1845)."

While it may be the largest Protestant denomination it is by no means the oldest. In fact, closer to home, the Reformed Church in America is the "oldest church in America with an uninterrupted ministry" (Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the Unites States*, Abington Press, 1990, page 213.) The RCA started when in 1628 Jonas Michaelius became pastor of the organized Collegiate Church in New Amsterdam (now New York City). The same handbook lists various other denominations such as Presbyterians and Methodists whose churches were established after 1628 but well before 1845.

Coenraad Bakker
Fairport, New York

Blessing, not vengeance

It was a real pleasure to read Michael Buma's thoughts and reflection on 9/11. I can't help but repeat his thoughts "the US. should have stopped to consider that 'trusting in God' at such a time might mean breaking its addiction to getting and spending and refusing to answer violence with violence." What disappointed me deeply was that President Bush's answer to violence was vengeance, not a program of action that could have been a blessing for the U.S.

Buma's point about the collapse of Lehman Brothers bank seven years after the attack, which still has worldwide ramifications, could have Biblical connotations.

Lots to say about Layton

I appreciated much of what Brian Walsh wrote (*CC* Sept. 12) regarding Jack Layton. But I had problems with some of his statements. One example: When Jesus talked about marriage, he always referred to how it was in the beginning.

I also understand Bert Witvoet's response (*CC* Oct. 10), but whether or not Jack Layton is in heaven only God knows.

I sent a letter to the editor of the *Waterloo Region Record* which read in part "I had so prayed for his (Jack's) recovery and now pray for his family in their sorrow. However, the fact that the message of Jesus Christ did not come through [in his funeral] really saddened me. What an opportunity Rev. Brent Hawkes had to share the story of salvation and hope of eternal life under such circumstances."

Ralph Koops
St. George, Ont.

I have included with this letter an image of a collage I made a month after 9/11 for a gallery exhibition in Niagara. It is currently hanging in a gallery for the tenth anniversary, and I have had some fabulous conversations with viewers of the work. The work is called *"Everything Has a Crack In It – That's How the Light Gets In"* (re. Leonard Cohen).

George Langbroek
St. Catharines, Ont.

Ed.'s note: With kind permission of the artist, we've included "Everything Has a Crack In It – That's How the Light Gets In" on page 20 of this issue.

Just a short response to Bert Witvoet's letter in the Oct. 10 issue of *CC*. I am not sure, Bert, that it is your call to determine whether Jack Layton was a Christian or not, or if the gates of heaven would be open to him.

What brand of Christian? Some form of Reformed, maybe Baptist of some stripe, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist/United, Episcopalian/Anglican, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, Greek Orthodox, Coptic, all of the above, some of the above, none of the above; maybe Other? Each has the Truth and claims their version of the Truth is the truest.

Bert quotes from Romans 4; good, I want to point us to the story (parable) of the sheep and the goats. Christ points us to the poor, the hungry and the broken, and our response to them. I, for one, am not so quick to close the gates of heaven to those who may not share my brand of being "Christian." That is not the way to usher in a better world. I don't think it was Christ's way either.

John Kamphof
Cobble Hill, B.C.

Where are Christians in the prison problem?

After reading "The problem with prisons" by Phil Christman (*CC* Oct. 11), I wanted to scream "where are the Christians in this Christian country and how can they allow all these images of God to be thrown away and locked behind stone walls?" Is there no organization or group whose vision is to confront our politicians with the injustice of this treatment of mostly the poorest segment of our neighbours?

George Langbroek
St. Catharines, Ont.

Nevermind, 20 years later *continued*

many teenagers need to explore and ultimately move beyond. This is part of growing up.

When I was in grade 10 I showed some Nirvana lyrics to my English teacher at the time (a current *CC* contributor whom I now consider a friend). He looked at the lyrics and no doubt recognized them for the bad poetry they were. But he didn't tell me they were bad poetry. I wouldn't have listened. What this teacher did instead was to invite me to consider something I hadn't thought about, the paradox that the members of Nirvana were "able to live like kings by saying royalty sucks." That insight blew my grade 10 mind. I went home and thought about this for a long time, and my opinion of Nirvana began to come back down to earth. A few months later Kurt Cobain committed suicide, which I interpreted at the time as a sort of radical, terrible authenticity. If indulging in anguish led to such terrifying depths, this was not for me in any overarching or definitive way.

Relating to teens

It's a little late to be announcing a thesis, but I see all of this as an argument for a certain kind of youth ministry or mindset when relating to young people. Youth ministry that sanitizes, prohibits or tries to give answers (rather than leading by asking the right questions) does not work. And when it does, it produces spiritual automatons with no capacity for critical thinking or genuine emotional depth. Contemporary Christian rock has never spoken to me for largely this reason. Aside from being overly produced, tediously obvious and guilelessly bland, there always seems to be a point of authenticity and truth past which such music refuses to go. When confronted with the terrifying and traumatic inadequacy of human symbols and rituals, the realm of incomprehensible wholeness that Jacques Lacan calls "the Real," contemporary Christian music tends to flinch and turn back.

Although their aesthetic doesn't hold up much beyond the teenage wasteland sensibility, Nirvana's music was at least spiritually and intellectually honest in its willingness to plumb the existential depths. This is the sort of honesty that teenagers crave. God imbued us with a profound curiosity for the deep-down nature of things, a powerful capacity for creativity and delight and, perhaps most primal and necessary of all, an intense yearning for truth. The best thing Christian adults can do when relating with teens is to remember this: to keep up their own searching and inquisitiveness, to offer truth rather than platitudes even when it means a young explorer might get lost and, especially when one does get lost, to (in the simple and profound words of Lionel Basney) "pray for the healing of what you cannot heal."

Michael Buma teaches at the University of Western Ontario and is interim editor of the Christian Courier. *His favourite band this week is The Gaslight Anthem.*

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News

Ottawa: New journal opens dialogue on faith's public role

OTTAWA (CNA) – Two Canadian Christians – one a Roman Catholic priest and the other a Catholic layperson – have launched a new journal aimed at starting an intellectual dialogue on the public role of religion in Canada.

The new publication, *Convivium*, kicked off discussion on the topic with its introductory October 2011 volume.

"The *Convivium* project is 'really all about God,'" the non-denominational magazine's Catholic publisher Peter Stockland wrote in an introductory letter to the first issue. "But borrowing from Pope Benedict's World Communications Day message, it is also about linking God in the real world 'to the real faces of our brothers and sisters, those with whom we share our daily lives.'"

Stockland continued, "Our objective is to address matters and present writing of a standard that communicates the need for reflection, debate and engagement." Stockland aims not for a mass audience, but for "a robust and enriched community of readers" seeking thoughtful commentary on faith and society, he says.

Joining him in the endeavour, which is sponsored by the Cardus Centre for Cultural Renewal, is editor-in-chief Father Raymond de Souza. A parish priest and Queen's University economics professor, Fr. de Souza has written for numerous publications, including the *National Post* and the *Catholic Register.*

Convivium represents one part of a larger project that will include public lectures, seminars and other meetings meant to strengthen religious believers' public presence.

The Cardus Centre wants the *Convivium* project – in its literary, electronic and offline dimensions – to be a "community that connects citizens committed to the renewal of Canadian culture and our common life."

Targeting intellectuals

Convivium's first issue featured *National Post* religion reporter Charles Lewis' thoughts on faith and journalism, Ottawa Archbishop Terrence Prendergast's reflections on the upcoming new Mass translation, New Democrat MP Bill Blaikie's outlook on the "religious Left" and a feature on "The Torments of China's Religious Believers" of various Christian traditions.

Along with de Souza's "Small Talk" column offering notes on a range of news items, the editor-in-chief will write a monthly "continuing survey" of cultural trends in his "From Sea to Sea" section. The first installment of "From Sea to Sea" included discussions of Canadian Catholic convert and intellectual Marshall McLuhan, and the career of late New Democratic leader Jack Layton.

In an interview published in *Convivium's* inaugural issue, Cardus Centre president Michael Van Pelt says his Christian think-tank wants to "target a public intellectual community in Canada that has the ability and the desires to discuss topics that range from politics to religion to culture." He asserts, "That public intellectual dialogue isn't happening in Canada."

Van Pelt believes that the project of changing Canada's culture for the better requires serious thought and sustained discussion. "Actions, whether good or evil, are very rarely rooted in a spontaneous idea," he observed. "Most often they're rooted in ideas that have been bandied about and talked about for many, many years. Poetry is written about them. They inspire all kinds of art and other cultural forms. Debates range in the pub over them. And then suddenly they're done. But the conversation came first."

Van Pelt concluded, "We want *Convivium* to be a place where that conversation takes place in Canada."

Medenblik inaugurated as new Calvin Seminary president

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Rev. Jul Medenblik dropped to his knees on a Saturday morning last month, took up a glass pitcher and began pouring water over the bare feet of John Cooper, a professor of philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS).

Medenblik, having minutes before been inaugurated as the new president of Calvin Seminary, then took a towel and carefully dried Cooper's feet. As he did so, Cooper leaned over in his chair and placed his hand appreciatively on Medenblik's shoulder.

Both those participating and those watching said it was a moving moment, one of many during the two-hour "Called to Serve" service in which Medenblik was inaugurated as seventh president of the Christian Reformed Church in North America's seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The service took place at Calvin College's Covenant Fine Arts Center.

Before the foot washing, Connie Kromminga Mulder, daughter of former CTS president John H. Kromminga, read John 13:1-17, the part of the gospel describing how Jesus, on the night before he died, washed the feet of his disciples and told them to do the same for others. Medenblik says the passage speaks deeply to him and inspires him as he seeks to be a servant who encourages others to also be servants in Christ's name.

Called to serve

"It is Jesus Christ who we are to follow," Medenblik said as he preached his first sermon as seminary president. "We are marked by his love, and we are to share that love with others.... May our attention turn to Jesus and may we serve others as he has served us."

Rev. Case Admiraal, former pastor of Bethel CRC in Fulton, Illinois, testified to God's calling on the life of the new president. The Medenbliks attended Admiraal's church. Admiraal recalled how he saw that calling at work in the life of Jul Medenblik even when he was in high school. "I came to know Jul very well and it became apparent that God had graced him with many gifts" – gifts that could be used in ministry.

Although Medenblik pursued a law degree and practiced law for a time, he couldn't avoid the calling that Admiraal discerned. Medenblik eventually left the law to earn a Master of Divinity degree at Calvin Seminary.

From there he went on to found the church in New Lenox, watching it grow from four people to more than 700. He also worked for Christian Reformed Home Missions as a leader in church planting. "Even when he was working as an attorney, God was preparing Jul for something else," said Admiraal.

Medenblik asked for members of the CTS faculty and staff, as well as the church at large, to help him in a life of ministry and service to others. "I will not be able to serve well unless we serve together as a community . . . This will not work unless God leads and we follow," he said.

As a reminder of the inauguration service and its theme, all those who attended were given a towel on which are screened the words: "CTS Called to Serve."

Critic: UK aid policy should help persecuted Christians

LONDON, UK (CNA) Former British politician Ann Widdecombe criticized Prime Minister David Cameron for axing foreign aid to countries that persecute gays while overlooking widespread threats to Christians.

"David Cameron's government have threatened to cut the overseas aid budget for countries which persecute homosexuals," Widdecombe said in London at a conference for the international charity Aid to the Church in Need last month. "Fair enough. But what about Christians? When do we qualify for such protection – or don't we?"

Widdecombe, a Catholic convert who represented the Conservative Party as a Member of Parliament from 1987 to 2007, contrasted the government's pro-gay overseas aid policy with its stance on some countries' state-sponsored violence against Christians.

Recently named a "special envoy on religious freedom" for Aid to the Church in Need, Widdecombe gave the keynote address at the event titled "The Arab Spring: A Spring or Autumn for Christians?"

During her speech, she noted that in Pakistan, where U.K. aid will double to 350 million British pounds per year, Christian Asia Bibi has been sentenced to death for blasphemy, a case that has drawn international condemnation. Meanwhile, U.K. International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell has cut the country's aid to Malawi after two homosexual men were sentenced to 14 years of hard labour.

"In the last 10 years, how many debates have there been on persecution of Christians, how many government statements on the subject?" Widdecombe asked. "You stand a better chance of earnest representation if you are a hedgehog – and I speak as a patron of the Hedgehog Protection Society."

The former MP's comments come in the wake of the Oct. 9 attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt that left 25 dead and over 300 injured.

Aid to the Church in Need reported that in 2011, 75 percent of all religious persecution worldwide was directed against Christians. The group noted that around 105,000 Christians are killed every year for faith-related reasons.

The Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organizations said that since the fall of President Mubarak in February more than 100,000 Christians had fled the country because of a surge in violence against religious minorities. And in Iraq, the Christian population has plummeted from 1.4 million to around 150,000.

Widdecombe strongly appealed to her government to make the defense of religious freedom a foreign policy priority. "Today we should all begin to act. Each of us should pick one country, pray for it, donate to the church there, write to [U.K. Foreign Secretary] William Hague and the local MP."

News

U.S.: Senate may kill religious freedom commission when most needed

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CCO) – The existence of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) – a non-partisan body that documents religious-freedom violations around the world – is at risk.

USCIRF's mandate was to expire on September 30, but it was given a short reprieve through the continuing resolution on the budget, explains Nina Shea, a human rights lawyer, director of Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom and a member of the commission. "Meanwhile, on September 15, the House of Representatives, in a 391–21 vote, overwhelmingly passed HR 2867 to reauthorize USCIRF for two more years."

But in the U.S. Senate, a single senator anonymously called back the bill as it was poised to pass under a unanimous consent agreement. "If that secret hold is not lifted by November 18, the Senate will not be able to act and USCIRF will go out of existence," says Shea.

Christianity Today explains how that could happen. "In the Senate, consideration of legislation often requires unanimous consent. This means that any Senator can block legislation from consideration. The Senate rules allow what is often called a "secret hold." A Senator can put a hold on a bill by telling his or her party leader that the Senator opposes consideration of a bill. The Senator's name is not made public. In the case of the USCIRF, there is one Senator placing a hold on the re-authorization bill."

Shea pointed out in the *National Review* that the lone senator's opposition cannot be for lack of need for such a commission. "Religious persecution around the world threatens many minority groups": Egyptian Copts, Pakistani Ahmadiyas, Saudi Ismaili Shiites, Baha'is in Iran and Chinese Sunni Uighurs, Tibetan Buddhists, Jews – not to mention Christians of all stripes.

"Those who do not conform to prevailing religious orthodoxies are also targeted individually," said Shea. "For example, in Iran, apostasy charges threaten the life of a Christian pastor. This year, Pakistan's minister of minorities and the governor of Punjab were separately gunned down for defending those imprisoned under a harsh blasphemy law. It is this moment that the Senate has chosen to quietly shut down the independent U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom."

Low-budget but effective

USCIRF was created in 1998 under the International Religious Freedom Act, an initiative of Rep. Frank Wolf (Republican, Virginia.). It was overwhelmingly adopted by both chambers of the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Its mandate was born of the concern that, when it comes to religion issues in foreign affairs, the foreign-policy establishment, the media and secular human-rights groups have been inattentive at best.

Speaking on the floor of the House, Rep. Wolf said, "This bill has been held hostage by the other body – and keep the word 'hostage' out there as we think in terms of what this bill would do and what's taking place around the world. I wish I could name [the one person in opposition]. And, quite frankly, I believe that some over there [in the Senate] and this very administration would not mind seeing this Commission shut its doors."

In contrast to the State Department's own religious freedom office, USCIRF is an independent agency. It names the world's worst religious persecutors and makes non-binding foreign-policy recommendations to the government. Its inter-faith group of nine commissioners are appointed on a bipartisan basis.

At $4 million, its budget is a fraction of that of the U.S. Institute for Peace. It rents a modest suite of offices for its staff, and its commissioners receive no remuneration for their time. Nevertheless, USCIRF is distinguished as a bold voice within the government and has seen important accomplishments. It pushed the Bush administration to understand the north-south conflict in Sudan as primarily a religious one, and not merely a fight over resources; this led to specific policies that resulted in the secession of South Sudan this past July and political independence and religious freedom for its people.

It got the U.S. State Department to designate as "egregious" persecutors China, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. It keeps the focus on religious atrocities in places like Vietnam, Pakistan, Iraq and Egypt, even when the State Department does not. It was the first official body to recognize the terrible plight of Iraq's minorities, and to speak up for the Copts. It is now pushing for some American aid to Egypt to be used to protect this endangered group. Five years ago, it was the first to take official notice of Saudi textbooks inciting religious violence; influenced by USCIRF prodding, the State Department has decided this year to take a look for itself inside these texts.

Recently, USCIRF identified key Iranian authorities responsible for religious persecution and succeeded in having them denied visas to the U.S. In Nigeria, its insistent appeals to end legal impunity, impressed on its leaders in repeated visits by USCIRF delegations headed by chair Leonard Leo, led this year to the first convictions in sectarian strife that has killed thousands over the past decade.

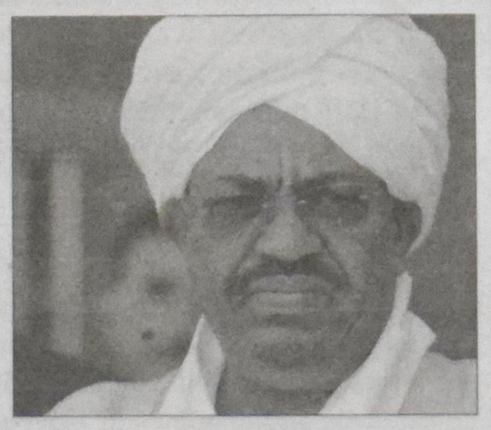
"USCIRF is one reliable voice within the [U.S.] government that does not find the issue of religious freedom too sensitive to bring up with foreign potentates," says Shea. In this, USCIRF is unique. Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Philippines are now examining its model. Other world democracies may soon follow. The European Union has called for its member states to adopt specific guidelines on the defense of freedom of religion and belief abroad, citing in particular the repression of religious minorities and persecution from apostasy laws.

"It would be ironic indeed if the U.S. Senate were to unilaterally give up a key American instrument in the global contest of ideas, just as other parts of the free world are starting to catch on to the importance of religious freedom," says Shea.

Sudan: Mounting concerns

Imminent adoption of Sharia puts pressure on churches

KHARTOUM, Sudan (CSW) – Christian Solidarity Worldwide has expressed concern regarding the implications of an entirely Shari'a-based constitution on freedom of worship in the Republic of Sudan, in the wake of increasing pressure on churches in the area since the creation of South Sudan on July 9, 2011.



On October 12 President Omar Al-Bashir announced that the Republic of Sudan would soon adopt an entirely Islamic constitution, enshrining Shari'a as the main source of Sudanese legislation. The announcement comes against the backdrop of an intensification of pressure on churches in the north following creation of South Sudan on July 9, 2011.

In a speech to students in Khartoum, Al-Bashir said, "Ninety eight percent of the people are Muslims and the new constitution will reflect this. The official religion will be Islam and Islamic law the main source." The announcement reinforces a similar statement made on December 19, 2010, in which Al-Bashir had warned that, "If south Sudan secedes, we will change the constitution and at that time there will be no time to speak of diversity of culture and ethnicity ... Shari'a and Islam will be the main source for the constitution, Islam the official religion and Arabic the official language."

In theory, Sudan's current constitution provides for freedom of religion, recognising in Article 1 that the state is "multi-religious." The pending removal of this acknowledgement has led to increased concerns for the future of more than a million largely non-Muslim southerners, who still live in the north, and also for northerners who are non-Muslim.

A recent increase in threats to churches and church leaders in the north underpins fears for the future of Christians in Sudan. Numerous reports from South Kordofan have indicated that Christians, especially Christian leaders, have been targeted by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) since violence broke out in June 2011. On July 18 the Anglican Bishop of Kadugli and two other clergymen who were meeting at his home narrowly escaped injury when it came under attack by assailants who left threatening letters. During July and August, 10 church leaders in Khartoum are reported to have received threatening text messages warning of imminent attacks aimed at creating a "purely Islamic state." According to Compass Direct, on September 11 officials from the Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities in Khartoum State threatened to demolish three church buildings in Omdurman if worship services continued, claiming that the land on which the buildings stand belongs to the government.

Meanwhile, a broader crackdown on freedoms is underway, with hundreds of members of opposition party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), arrested in late September, while newspapers have been banned from reporting statements from leaders of the SPLM-N or Darfur rebel groups.

Other political parties in Sudan are renewing their calls for the formation of a national government. The leader of prominent opposition group the National Umma Party (NUP), Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, said that the new constitution should be formed by a national government or a government of technocrats as opposed to the current government, which is dominated by Al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP).

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "CSW is deeply concerned at the announcement that the Republic of Sudan will soon adopt a new constitution that will further limit the rights and freedoms of the country's non-Muslim citizens. As the northern economy has weakened, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) appears to have reverted to its Islamist and Arabist roots in an effort to maintain power, and has sought to divert attention from its failures by launching a brutal campaign of aerial and ground warfare aimed primarily at civilians in the border regions of Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile State. It is deeply unfortunate for the people of Sudan that the ruling regime has learned nothing from years of fruitless warfare, and refuses to acknowledge that the creation of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state in which the rights of civil society are respected is the best guarantee for the peace and prosperity of the nation."

News

Evangelical school cancels breakfast with Bush

Will Braun

After news leaked that Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto was planning an invitation-only fundraising breakfast with George W. Bush, it only took two days for the event to be cancelled.

On September 12, the *Toronto Star* printed an article about the unpublicized breakfast, which was scheduled for September 20 at the Toronto Hilton Hotel. The event was to be sponsored by billionaire Prem Watsa, a supporter of Tyndale, an interdenomination evangelical school with 1,400 students. In the article, school president Gary Nelson acknowledged that Bush is a "lightning rod figure."

Lightning struck quickly. The next day the *Star* quoted Mark Groleau, Tyndale's valedictorian from just a few months earlier, and Arthur Boers, a Tyndale professor and former Mennonite minister, who both opposed the event. An online petition against the event had also been started by three alumni.

The day after that, Tyndale posted a one-line statement on its website: "Unfortunately, due to scheduling change [sic], the breakfast on September 20th 2011 has been cancelled."

It is possible that Watsa, who shuns media attention, pulled the plug on the event. But that is just speculation. No one has stated who actually cancelled the event or why, other than the dodgy euphemism about a "scheduling change." In fact, Bush still spoke at a September 19 event, also hosted by Watsa at the same hotel. Dan Oudshoorn, one of the petition instigators, reported on the petition website that Tyndale president Gary Nelson acknowledged to him that people associated with Tyndale were present at that event.

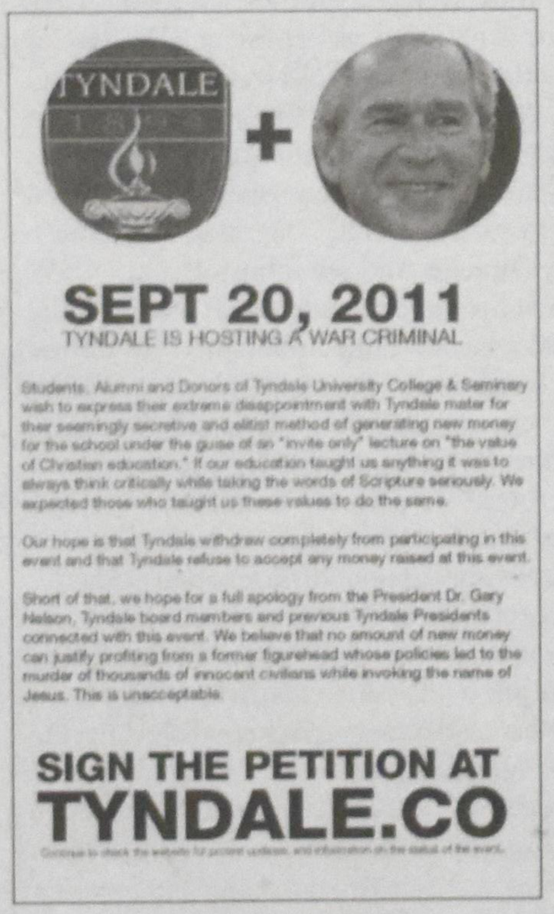
Arthur Boers said by phone that his primary concern is about how the situation was handled. "I wanted to have a healthy discussion about how Christians should interpret the legacy of George W. Bush."

Boers, who taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Indiana for much of Bush's presidency before coming to Tyndale, said he could not remain silent about the breakfast given Bush's impact on Christianity. "I saw during the Bush years in the U.S. that most Christians chose to remain silent in the face of pretty serious abuses of power and distortions of faith. For me silence is not an option."

In an article Boers wrote for *Christian Week*, he gives examples of how Bush "distorted sacred texts" to align American militarism with Christianity. "The ideal of America," Bush once said, "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

"Such claims need to be tested for blasphemy and heresy," Boers wrote. "Yet few Christians raised questions."

Boers was the only faculty member to publicly oppose the Bush breakfast, though an administrative staff person quietly resigned over the issue.


TYNDALE
+
SEPT 20, 2011
TYNDALE IS HOSTING A WAR CRIMINAL
Students, Alumni and Donors of Tyndale University College & Seminary wish to express their extreme disappointment with Tyndale mater for their seemingly secretive and elitist method of generating new money for the school under the guise of an "invite only" lecture on "the value of Christian education." If our education taught us anything it was to always think critically while taking the words of Scripture seriously. We expected those who taught us these values to do the same.
Our hope is that Tyndale withdraw completely from participating in this event and that Tyndale refuse to accept any money raised at this event.
Short of that, we hope for a full apology from the President Dr. Gary Nelson, Tyndale board members and previous Tyndale Presidents connected with this event. We believe that no amount of new money can justify profiting from a former figurehead whose policies led to the murder of thousands of innocent civilians while invoking the name of Jesus. This is unacceptable.
SIGN THE PETITION AT
TYNDALE.CO

This petition against former President Bush's planned visit to Tyndale was circulated online.

Communications staff at Tyndale indicated initially that Gary Nelson would be available for an interview, but subsequent calls and emails were not returned. A Tyndale professor known to support Bush also did not respond to an interview request.

Valedictorian Mark Groleau thinks Tyndale should host controversial figures, but it should happen in "forums of academic inquiry" not at promotional galas with "hand-picked distinguished guests." In contrast, some other critics of the breakfast – such as bloggers on the petition website – called Bush an unrepentant war criminal and said he should be given no platform whatsoever.

Groleau, who is now a pastor at The Meeting House, Canada's most innovative mega-church, said that for the school to align itself with Bush in this way was "a huge tactical and marketing blunder."

"The major capital that Tyndale has is that it is transdenomination," Groleau said of the school's reputation as an objective institution. "I just felt that Tyndale was about to squander that in epic proportions."

Despite his criticism, Groleau had a very positive meeting with Tyndale president Gary Nelson on September 15. Groleau said the two discussed their differences in an open and respectful way. "I really think we demonstrated the best that Tyndale stands for," said Groleau.

While not all the scars at Tyndale will be healed that neatly, the ability of Groleau and Nelson to discuss highly charged issues in a transparent, caring fashion stands as a lesson from the fiasco.

Will Braun is a Winnipeg writer. He can be reached at wbraun@inbox.com.

Principalities & Powers
David Koyzis

Political culture and institutional reform

A half century ago Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba published their path-breaking study, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. According to the authors, a civic culture is at once traditional and progressive, combining elements of older polities and newer developments. Great Britain and the United States were paradigmatic countries in this respect, becoming stable democratic systems in advance of much of the rest of the world. A civic culture is "a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permit[s] change but moderate[s] it." It incorporates a sense of fair play and a willingness to compromise one's own goals and aspirations for the sake of the greater good.

Of course, not every culture necessarily qualifies as civic in this sense. A political culture encompasses a complex of largely intangible attitudes and mores characterizing a political community. It includes attitudes towards authority, institutions, the exercise of political power, the nature of political rhetoric, styles of leadership and so forth. These cultural elements inevitably place constraints around efforts at reforming political institutions. One cannot simply decree democracy into existence where a people's traditions will not support it.

Autocratic rule

This hard reality should temper our expectations of the Arab Spring's political possibilities. Several months ago in this space I observed that "Egypt has been governed by some form of autocracy for the past five thousand years," and it is not likely to depart from this overnight. In fact, for more than a century revolutionary change in Western Asia and North Africa has generally not been good for religious minorities, including Christians and Jews.

In 1908 the Committee of Union and Progress, better known to us as the "Young Turks," seized power in the Ottoman Empire, restoring a previously abolished parliament and promising reforms to the faltering monarchical régime. CUP initially made an effort to appeal to the various ethnic groups in the empire, but, under pressure of war in 1915, was responsible for the genocide of Armenians. In September 1955 ethnic Greek homes, businesses and churches in Istanbul were systematically vandalized, leading to the mass exodus of a community that had lived there since before the Roman era.

In 1952 a revolution toppled Egypt's King Farouk and put Gamal Abdel Nasser in his place. A proponent of Arab socialism and nationalism, Nasser nevertheless made it difficult for Egyptian Jews and Greek Orthodox Christians to remain in the country. After the revolution earlier this year, conditions have worsened for the Coptic Christians, who suffered yet another violent attack in Cairo last month. Finally the once sizeable Assyrian Christian community in Iraq has dwindled dramatically since the American-led invasion of that country eight years ago.

After successfully ridding themselves of Muammar Qaddafi, Libyans face the challenge of establishing a genuine civic culture.

Libya after Qaddafi

Now Libya has finally rid itself of Muammar Qaddafi after eight months of civil war and 42 years of misrule. The National Transitional Council declared the country "liberated" and immediately began planning for the future. NTC chair Abdel Jalil's proclamation that Libya will follow moderate Islamic law will not come as good news for everyone.

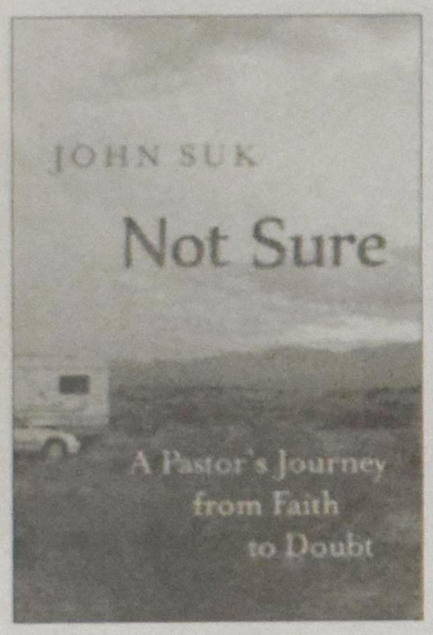
There is a small Christian minority in the country, with numbers estimated from the thousands to 150,000. Though it is unclear how Christians will fare under a new régime, recent precedents elsewhere in the region give little reason for optimism. Democracy may be proclaimed and relatively free elections held. Yet if the majority of citizens vote to bring to power an Islamist party with no inclination to respect the rights of minorities, justice will be the principal casualty. In such a context no amount of institutional reform will be enough to create a genuine civic culture.

Libyans cannot afford to wait the centuries it took Britain to develop a civic culture. We would do well to pray, not only that there will be no persecution of Christians in that country, but that its people will learn habits of fair play and a willingness to compromise sufficient to support a constitutional democracy.

David T. Koyzis (dkoyzis@redeemer.ca) is on a sabbatical leave from Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and has just completed a first draft of his book on authority, office and the image of God.

Reviews

Room for doubt – a pastor's journey



Not Sure: A Pastor's Journey from Faith to Doubt
by John Suk.
Grand Rapids MI and
Cambridge UK: Eerdman's, 2011

Bob Sweetman

Faith, when represented by its content (the things we believe), can be viewed in absolute terms. *Either* it lives within oneself as first and deepest certainty, beyond all questioning analysis, because it is the root-basis of all questioning analysis, *Or* one lies open to unfaith, faith's very negation. So viewed, faith and unfaith are mutually exclusive. It is either faith, every jot and tittle, or no faith at all; there is no middle way. While faith viewed as absolute is ever only one and the same, unfaith comes in many varieties: doubt, heresy, apostasy, unbelief. But when faith is absolute, so in the end is unfaith; all modes are at bottom one. They are to be repudiated by the faithful(l), and excised from the community.

I take it that John Suk grew up with a faith of this type, formed within the Christian and Reformed community in which he was raised, all mixed up with an austere set of mores and a decidedly ethnic cultural inflection. I read his book as his attempt to explore what it was about his particular formation that went into viewing faith in this absolute way. For it nearly undid him, and he is guessing that there are a lot of people who find themselves in his boat, people Christian and Reformed, to be sure, but also many other Christians from many other communions. I am guessing his publisher agrees. So do I.

John Suk – preacher, scholar of communication theory, theologian – throws everything he has at the problem. Augustine-like, he casts his story as a double narrative. Somewhere between his personal circumstances within the Christian Reformed Church and its Dutch immigrant experience in Canada, on the one hand, and the sweeping historical changes in western culture occasioned by its orientation to oral, written and electronic-digital forms of communication, on the other, lie circumstances applicable to the Christian believers he hopes to serve. Like a Jazz pianist, he trills his two contiguous notes, the personal and the cultural-historical, in order to call up a quartertone in-between: the dilemma of believers suspended between the orality of Christian origins, the deep literacy of both its modern past and post-modern present, and the emergence of a "second orality" occasioned by the advent of digital culture. I say "suspended between" but "crucified" might be more to the point. There is pain and anguish here, for he interprets the story of his experience as the simultaneous presence of "faith" and "doubt" and he has been formed as a Christian to understand that simultaneous presence as the impossible coexistence of "faith" and "unfaith" – a co-existence that demands of him a choice he cannot make. As he shows us his struggle to understand, we see that bits of oral, modern and postmodern literate, and "second orality" faith have become part and parcel of his very Christian being. They separately form him in different ways, and disappoint him in others. And they all contribute to the troubling and stubborn coexistence of faith and doubt.

***Doubt is always a stranger; therefore, as a good Christian, I must always work to be its gracious host* (7).**

The understanding of faith John Suk moves toward is at its best less emphatic about intellectual content, less interwoven with a particular set of mores, less inflected by a particular ethnicity than it once had been. It is a faith he receives *in* as well as *in spite of* the presence of doubt. It participates in the mixed situation of our rent hearts in the time between Christ's Ascension and his Coming Again. If I may typify this faith poetically I would call it a sense of the God-toward-ness in things that are never just God-toward. This faith lives in the mix. But that means it walks hand in hand with doubt in a world that is in its every particle created *and* fallen *and* subject to the operations of redemption unto the World-Made-Right.

The faith John Suk arrives at is not an impregnable fortress. Rather, it seems built for saints called to persevere in an ambiguous world. In this, it strikes me that he finds a thoroughly Christian and Reformed way to understand the place he has come to in his Christian living. His is a faith that is ever relative to the divine call to persevere, namely, a faith formed to the P in TULIP: a faith appropriate to the "perseverance of the saints." And my heart, for its part, responded as I read the passages that most unself-consciously bore witness to the gritty faith of the perseverant. It beat out a pattern of recognition as if to acknowledge in its muscular way that Christian living is about persevering out of a trust in the God of the scriptures big enough to contain doubt without harm. Is John Suk right? Was my heart wise in its sympathy? There's room for doubt but I trust his views are well worth reading and discussing.

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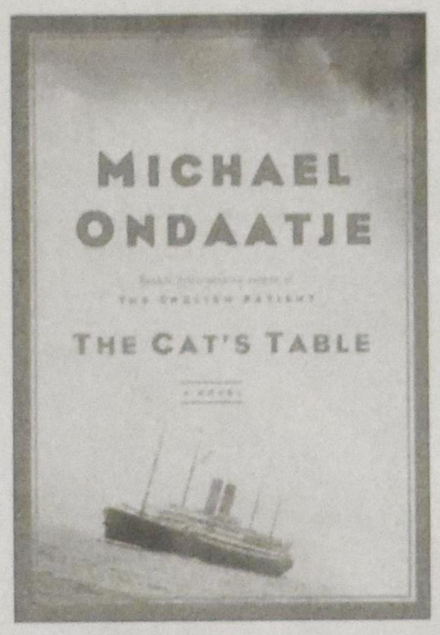
A voyage alone – or not?



The Cat's Table
by Michael Ondaatje.
Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2011.

Brenda Visser

For many of our readers, the story of a boy emigrating to another country by ship is one that may have instant appeal. The transition from one life to another, with adventures and new experiences on board that are so different from familiar everyday life, is something that many Dutch Canadians can relate to. Canadian Michael Ondaatje (author of *The English Patient*) explores this type of turning point in his most recent and Giller Prize short-listed book, *The Cat's Table*.

Unlike many Dutch who moved to Canada by ship in the 1950s with their families, *The Cat's Table* is about the journey of a young boy travelling alone. "Mynah", as everyone called him, has been sent to Britain from Colombo (a port city of present-day Sri Lanka) to meet his mother, whom he has not seen for more than four years. His 21-day-journey takes him through the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. During the voyage, Mynah shares a room with a stranger, and eats at the "cat's table," a place reserved for the lowest of the social hierarchy.

With virtually no supervision, Mynah (also known as Michael) and his friends, Ramadhin and Cassius, have many adventures that could only happen in the microcosm of a ship's world: "Sleep is a prison for a boy who has friends to meet." The boys roamed the ship freely at all times of day or night, taking food from the dining room, hiding in lifeboats, exploring the first class deck and prowling in the depths of the engine rooms. The storytelling is full of humour and risk.

There is a sad and perhaps regretful tone in the book. The narrator, the now-adult Mynah, says,

> "It is only now, years later, having been prompted by my children to describe the voyage, that it becomes an adventure, when seen through their eyes, even something significant in a life. A rite of passage. But the truth is, grandeur had not been added to my life but taken away. As night approached, I missed the chorus of insects, the howls of garden birds, gecko talk. And at dawn, the rain in the trees..." (53).

Ondaatje's exemplary talent as a writer shines through the slow revealing of the good and bad in the characters, such as those who sit around the cat's table with the three boys. All the personalities described are complex, with an air of mystery about them that remains to the end. Although the reader gets to know the characters, there are enough twists and turns in their words and actions to leave a reader with a vague unease – how well do we really know those near to us? The narrator says these things himself:

> But what did we really know, even of one another? We never thought of a future. Our small solar system – what was it heading towards? And how long would each of us mean something to the others?

There is a lot of introspection in this book as the narrator explores the pivotal ship's journey in his life. He says, "Some events take a lifetime to reveal their damage and influence." This theme is strong throughout as the narrator reflects on his life since the passage by sea, weaving in and out of the 11-year-old that he was to the man he is as he writes books and travels.

It is only now, years later, having been prompted by my children to describe the voyage, that it becomes an adventure (53).

Many of us wonder about things in our past and do not discover until much later the consequences of words spoken or actions taken. Ondaatje challenges us to look at ourselves, at our relationships and our choices.

And this is where my opinion of the book falters. The pessimism here suggests that relationships are by their very nature fragile and dangerous. And while this resonates with me somewhat, ultimately it stands in direct contrast to the Christian worldview I have where God says, "I will never leave you" (see Deuteronomy 31 and several other passages). Ondaatje's story seems to suggest that ultimately we are very alone and very insecure: "It was not only the things we could see that had no safety. There was the underneath," Mynah says after experiencing a violent storm while on the deck.

I would rate this book as four out five stars. It is excellently crafted, but I am reluctant to fully endorse the ideology. That being said, I think it is worth the price of a hardcover in a digital age.

Brenda Visser (brenda.visser@ripnet.com), mother of four and wife of one, lives and writes in Athens, Ontario.

The thanks of ordinary people

Heather Wright

I can still see her face even though almost two decades have passed. It's not that she was a remarkable beauty, or that we were friends. It's the earnestness in her eyes that I still see.

I don't remember her name, but she found me in the throng of people in the hall in Belgium. She must have noticed the small Canadian flag pin I was wearing which officials from Canadian Armed Forces had given me at the beginning of our pilgrimage to that country. I was one journalist in a sea of uniforms, current and past, all of whom had come to celebrate the end of the Second World War. For some reason, this unremarkable 60-something woman with bobbed greying hair found me.

"You're Canadian?" she asked, her steel-blue eyes looking directly into mine.

"Yes. I'm a Canadian reporter."

Suddenly, she had a little chain in her hand that she looked at for a moment; then she began to tell me her story.

"I was a little girl during the war," she said, "and the Canadians came to our town to liberate us. One of those soldiers became my friend. He had a little girl about my age at home and so he had a soft spot for me. He bought a necklace for his little girl back home, but, before he left, he cut it in half and gave one piece to me. The other half he would give to his Canadian daughter."

I listened to the story and was speechless.

"Someone in Canada," she pleaded, "must know this story. Somewhere in Canada is the woman with the other half of this necklace. Could you help me find her?"

Fifty years after a Canadian soldier had come to her village and left her that chain – making her his Belgian daughter – she remembered. She wanted to find him or his relatives and say thank you for that simple act of kindness, a moment that brought a little girl, whose faith had been shattered by an army bent on destroying her country, to a place where she could trust again. She wanted to say thank you.

That woman with an unforgettable story was just one of the ordinary people who wanted to say thank you to the aging veterans with whom I traveled. At cemeteries across the small country, school children carefully tended graves as their heartfelt act of thanks to Canadians who never returned home.

HEATHER WRIGHT

The buglers of the Fire Department in Ypres have given their thanks every single night since the First World War ended, except for the duration of the Nazi occupation, performing an Act of Remembrance at the Menin Gate.

The gate itself is a monument to thousands upon thousands of people, including Canadian men and women, who lost their lives on battlefields in the Ypres Salient, but whose bodies were never recovered.

Canadians as saviours

The jeweler on the square off Ghent who saw my Canadian pin refused to let me pay for the small repair I needed. "You are Canadian," he said with great enthusiasm. "You are our saviour." Of all the amazing things I heard on that trip, this perhaps had the most impact. As a Christian, the word saviour, or should I say, Saviour, is meaningful and powerful. To have someone attribute that to me just because of my nationality made me recoil.

"No, no," I quickly said. "I'm Canadian, but I really had nothing to do with it."

It wasn't just the fact that I had not physically stepped on the battlefields as so many Canadian men and women selflessly had; my parents were actually recipients of Canadian bravery. Both Mom and Dad lived in Holland during the Second World War. My dad was in his teens and my mom just a young girl. They saw the Canadian soldiers liberate their homeland. They and their parents came to this country, I believe, in large part because of that rescue.

As I tried to explain this to the shopkeeper, it struck me for the first time that these veterans who surrounded me represented more than just history. They were part of *my* history! I think about it often now – how these people, who started out as ordinary folks, donned uniforms to fight for what was just, and changed the course of my family's life and secured a future for me. What would my life be like today if my parents had met, married and had children in Nazi-occupied Holland? Would they have met at all? Would they have survived? It's speculation. The Canadian men and women came and fought and died, selflessly, so I could live.

Over the years, as I've reported on Remembrance Day so many times, I think of that shopkeeper and his declaration that Canadians were Belgium's saviour. I understand what he meant. The sacrifices families made when young men didn't return, and the horrors the survivors lived through and lived with ever after because of what they endured, carry echoes of what our Saviour did for us – his sacrifice of coming down to this broken world, leaving his Father behind and, in the end, facing unspeakable horrors, the worst death known to humans – death on the cross. Christ did this out of his infinite love for us: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us," says Romans 5:8. The Bible points out how rare this is for humans: "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die" (Romans 5:7).

Whatever the motivation of those young Canadian men and women, I will never cease to be in awe of what they did for my family. And for me. On November 11, that's what I will remember. And that's only part of my thanks. I feel a duty to continue to tell the stories of Canadians who paid the ultimate sacrifice for others.

Taking remembrance one step further

But I also feel an obligation, in whatever way I can, to fight for justice for someone who lives around the corner or around the globe. Sometimes signing an online petition or writing a letter to federal officials doesn't seem like much, but it is one more voice looking for justice.

Occasionally, when I speak up for people in a faraway country, others think or even say aloud, "We have enough problems of our own; why should we worry about someone in Sudan or Libya or Afghanistan?" I try not to get angry at that narrow-minded thinking. I simply remember that over a half century ago, Canadians thought about the problems of some people in that faraway country of Holland and took the ultimate stand for justice, so I would have life and a voice to speak out for someone else in need.

It is one ordinary person's way of saying thank you.

Heather Wright is a freelance journalist working in both radio and newspaper in Sarnia/Lambton and southwestern Ontario.

Making history personal:
Veteran talks to school children about the Second World War

Veteran Bill Abbott. Photo courtesy of John Knox Christian School, Wyoming, Ont.

Heather Wright

There are many stories Bill Abbott could tell Lambton County school children from his time in the Second World War. The former truck driver/operator could lay out the facts of the war. He could tell about the crowds of people who lined the streets of Holland after the Liberation and the over-exuberant young lady who fell right into the White Scout Car, blocking the already limited view of the driver with her skirt. He could tell them about driving through the dark streets of England during the blackout … and then seeing them light up again as the blackout was lifted.

But that's not what the member of the Royal Canadian Legion's Wyoming, Ontario Branch talks about. Abbott tries to make what happened decades ago real to children by telling them about the people he knew who died. "Like the softball pitcher. We had great games together. I was going to high school and was in the same class with his sister when she was told he died," says Abbott. He also talks about his wife's high school classmates and, if they were to hold a reunion, how it would only be girls because all of the boys died during the war.

Abbott tells the personal stories because he knows from experience that's how children remember. "My father was in the First World War and was wounded out," Abbott says. "I was born in 1925. I didn't identify with the war, but I could poke my finger in my dad's arm where the shell hit." While memories of the First World War are vague, the memories of the Second are clear. "It was different because people that I knew died in the war."

This Remembrance Day Abbott will visit one or two schools again, to help the children remember. At times, he'll reminisce about those who have gone before, or he may just tell them a funny story about one of those "ridiculous" moments from when he first began to serve.

Whatever he talks about, Abbott says the students will be listening. "They listen very carefully; they try to understand."

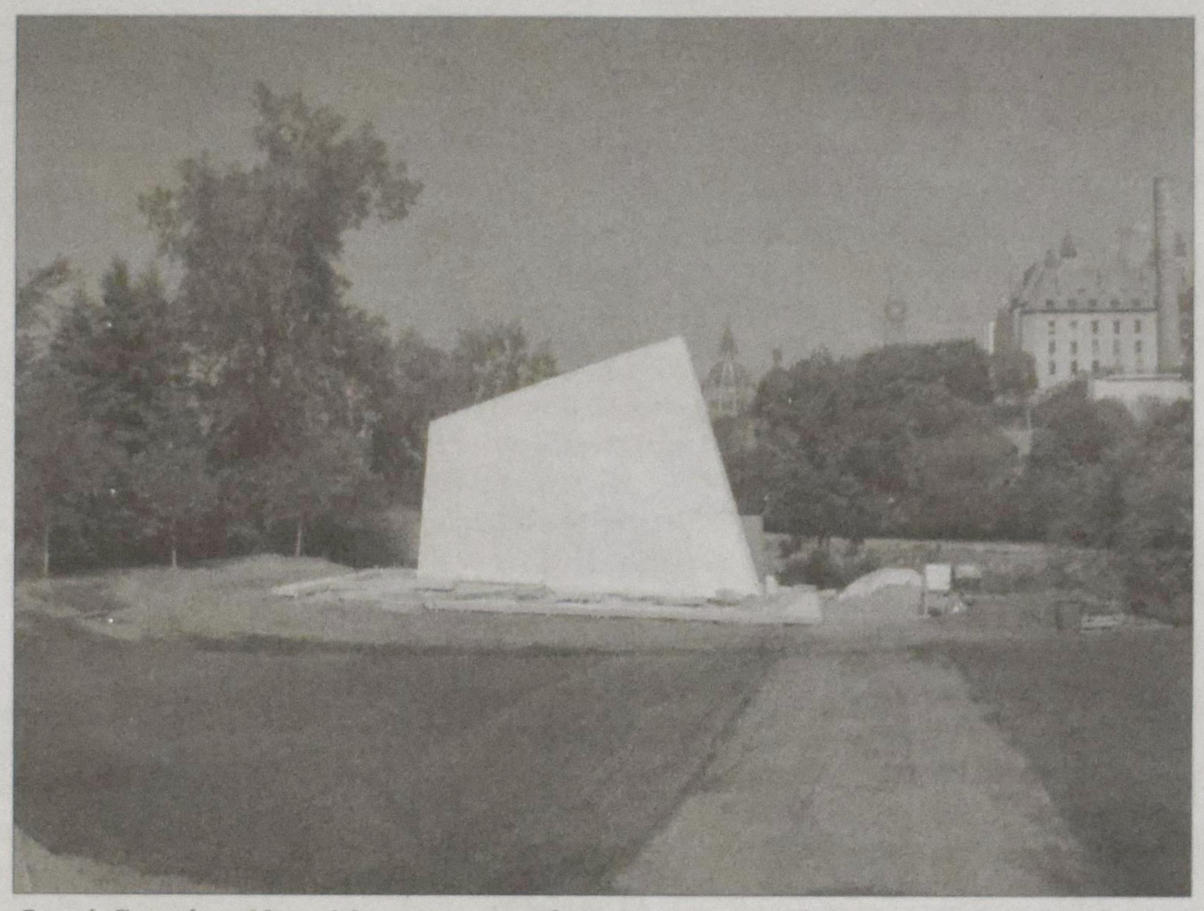
This story originally appeared in Sarnia Lambton This Week, Nov. 10, 2010. Shared with permission.

Christian Courier is privileged to present the work of our Parliamentary Poet Laureate, Mr. Pierre DesRuisseaux, who has kindly granted permission to reprint the poem featured here. Written to commemorate the centennial of the Royal Canadian Navy in 2009, the poem highlights the fact that our freedom is a precious heritage maintained at a sacrificial cost. Watch for the unveiling of the Canadian Navy Monument on Richmond Landing in Ottawa in the spring of 2012. – Cathy Smith, *Features Editor*

EVERYTHING BEGINS NOTHING ENDS

Dear Lord our God,
I beg you, you the greatest giver,
Who grants and bestows,
The good I seek for all men,
Merciful and most holy,
Spare us the worries and misery
Along the course we steadfastly stay
From the day we set sail.

Excerpt from the poem,
From Mascate to Mokha,
by Sa'îd Ibn Sâlim Bâtâyi' (16th century)



Royal Canadian Navy Monument – under construction. Photo courtesy of the National Capital Commission (NCC).

Everything begins nothing ends
first the Niobe and then the Rainbow
this is the entire Canadian navy
and not enough sailors

and in nineteen fourteen
a first contingent
sets sail from Quebec, the sailors
heading for Jutland, fighting the Germans
alongside the British

the Cenobe suffers its first losses
in Kerno, the Canucks serve
under Jellicoe and Beatty
at the battle of Dogger Bank
taking part in the evacuation of Dunkirk
then the U-501 sank, hit by Canadian grenades,
followed by twenty-nine more enemy subs

they take part in the Murmansk convoys
support the D-Day landings
serve proudly in theatres in Greece, the Aleutian Islands,
Sicily and Italy, in Hong Kong
during the Korean War at Chinnampo
despite supply problems

during the Cold War, they travel the world
participate in a hundred operations
striving to assist and help keep the peace,
acting with bravery at all times

stirring leitmotiv of wandering seafarers
who serve duty day and night
despite the tremendous demands of some
the indifference of others

they patrol the Arctic
following in the steps of Joseph-Elzéar Bernier
firmly claiming what belongs to the country
protecting the coasts from traffickers and smugglers

in the Gulf War they back up the troops
support the Kosovo campaign
they serve in Somalia, in the Adriatic, in East Timor
wherever duty calls around the world

over and beyond the passage of time and the coastlines
where the boundless sea begins and land ends,
they are undaunted by the immensity of the ocean
and the endless tides
the ship's bow coursing through the foam
amid whirls of light.

Translation of the poem commemorating the Centennial of the Canadian Marine, written by Pierre DesRuisseaux, Parliamentary Poet Laureate, on a poetic mission on the frigate Montréal, *in the Atlantic, October 2009.*

Pierre DesRuisseaux – Biography

Born in Sherbrooke, in the Eastern Townships, in 1945, Pierre DesRuisseaux graduated from the Université de Montréal in philosophy. He was successively an editorial writer for regional and national weeklies, including Le petit journal, a proofreader and a foreign correspondent (Middle East) for the magazine Sept-Jours. Mr DesRuisseaux has published 14 collections of his poetry. His first book of poems, Lettres, *published by Hexagone in 1979, was greeted as a revelation in Quebec's literary world.*

In 1989, Monème *earned Canada's highest literary honour, the Governor General's Award. In 1995, Triptyque released his bilingual anthology of 25 English-Canadian poets,* Contre-taille, *which was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award the following year. In 1997, Mr DesRuisseaux published a translation of a collection of poems by Louis Dudek, leader of the Montreal school of English-language poetry, called* Dudek, l'essentiel, *with an introduction by Michael Gnarowski. In March 2000, Triptyque released his critical anthology of some 31 Anglo-Quebec poets, entitled* Co-incidences : poètes anglophones du Québec, *with a preface by Ken Norris. He is continuing to research popular culture, popular poetry and ethnolinguistic studies. Cited in a number of national and foreign anthologies, Pierre DesRuisseaux publishes both fiction and verse through a number of publishers, in Quebec and abroad. He has taken part in literary festivals and events (*Festival franco-anglais de poésie, lecture, Centre d'action poétique, France*) and collaborates regularly on Canadian and foreign literary reviews, including* Ruptures *(translations from the Spanish and fiction),* Sud *(France),* The Revue, Osiris *(USA),* Estuaire, Liberté *and* The Review *(UK).*

A scarred heart speaks

The Remains of War: Surviving the Other Concentration Camps of World War II
by G. Pauline Kok-Schurgers
(iUniverse.com, 2011)

Reviewed by Tom Smith

The Remains of War is G. Pauline Kok-Schurgers's first novel. It's a work that required the preparation of six decades of healing. Describing the experiences of "Sophia" during the oppressive occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese Imperial army, Kok-Schurgers is, in fact, writing a memoir about the suffering and alienation she herself endured during her imprisonment from 1942 on. While the names of individuals have been changed, perhaps providing a necessary distance for the author to be able finally to relate her story, the details about the treatment she sustained and the places of death she survived are shocking and real.

Sophia's story begins in the heat of the conflict with the Dutch Army struggling to maintain its stance against the invading Japanese forces. Sophia's family, living in Langsa, in the Dutch colony of Indonesia, are dealing daily with the realities of air raids, dwindling supplies, and the disruption of comforting routines such as going to school and socializing with neighbours. The loss of these ordinary experiences leaves the family losing their grasp on normalcy and their hold on each other.

Sophia narrates what life was like prior to the war. She describes quiet affluence, helpful and loving native servants, and deliciously exotic meals shared with family, friends, and locals. This idyllic lifestyle is dismantled with surprising speed when Sophia's father is arrested. In short order, Sophia, her mother, and her three siblings are also arrested. When Sophia and her father are finally reunited, four years later, after her imprisonment in the concentration camps and his incarceration in the work camps, the heartbreak is palpable. Sophia's father no longer recognizes his daughter.

A survival story

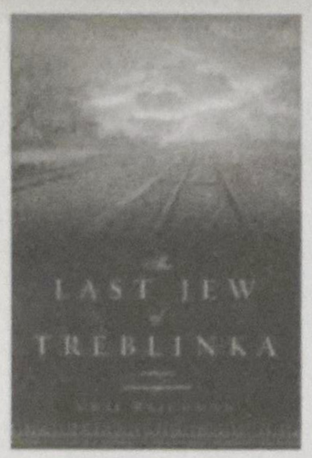
This is a survival story, a scarred heart recounting a ghoulish odyssey in plain and unadorned prose. Kok-Schurgers writes about children ripped from families and stuffed into trains without sanitation to ride for hours without rest. She writes about cramped living conditions where rats and disease are intimate bedfellows of the prisoners. She writes about raging guards and loathsome soldiers who violently punish and degrade women and children. All the while, the tropical heat and insect life bear down on the prisoners, too. The effect of these experiences on Sophia's inner life is poignant and painful. She struggles to find meaning in the suffering she faces. The heaviest weight on her soul is losing her mother, not through death, but through emotional abandonment. As the eldest daughter, she is the one who must fend for the entire family of mother and four children.

Questions about the presence of God arise, and Sophia cannot overcome her doubt. She cannot find answers in her despair and the reader sees her faith evaporating while she and other children waste away, hidden in the jungle. The Japanese surrender brings the end of the war and a new struggle, the painful and difficult relocation of families. They attempt to reconstruct their lives, but there is no healing for Sophia and her family. As Kok-Schurgers writes in her preface, "The war created a population of damaged and 'warped people.'"

The Remains of War: Surviving the Other Concentration Camps of World War II ends abruptly and leaves the reader with the haunting image of freshly-dug pits discovered near the camps. They were to function as mass graves. Had the war not ended when it did, a pit would have been Sophia's final resting place. The tragedy of so many deaths and the desecration of humanity in such great numbers, made more terrible by the fact that this chapter in history is less well-known, often glossed over, lost in the awful shadow of parallel events transpiring in Europe, leaves a yawning maw of pain in the hearts of the survivors. It is clear from this raw account that the author is not yet entirely healed. And that, of course, is what her title acknowledges … the lingering "remains of war."

Tom Smith is a secondary school teacher living in Barrie, Ontario. He is a youth leader at First Christian Reformed Church there.

Bearing witness



The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Survivor's Memory 1942-1943 by Chil Raichman
(Pegasus Books, 2011)

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Chil Raichman's 1945 memoir of his horrific year in Treblinka (1942-1943), and the deaths of 800,000 Jews there, is the only survivor's record. It was written "without hope or agenda other than to bear witness." While many people have read about the Nazi's Final Solution to eradicate Jews in well-known concentration camps like Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Bergen-Belsen, few have heard of Treblinka, completed in June 1942.

The writer's duty

My first reaction as I began to read Raichman's story was to close the book, to refuse to know and to remember what happened in Treblinka. Yet, as Vasily Grossman, a Soviet Jewish writer who visited Treblinka after the Red Army arrived there in the summer of 1945, pointed out: "It is the writer's duty to tell the terrible truth, and it is a reader's civic duty to learn this truth. To turn away, to close one's eyes and walk past, is to insult the memory of those who have perished."

The reader's duty

And so we read testimonies like that of Raichman, and then we remember. Upon Raichman's arrival in Treblinka with others, including his younger sister, he was forced to strip naked. Most were herded like cattle to the gas chambers. Raichman, however, was selected to sort and bundle the clothes and possessions of the victims. As he worked, he found his sister's dress, a horrifying reminder of her fate. He tore a piece from it, keeping it for the length of his incarceration.

Beaten incessantly, he survived as a bundler of goods and was chosen to be a "barber," though he had no idea what the job entailed. He soon found out what the hellish task involved. On the way to the gas chamber, naked women were herded through a row of "barbers," who cut off their long hair and stuffed it into suitcases. Terrified, Raichman complied. He recalled a poignant scene that underscores the responsibility to remember: "Before me sits a young woman. I cut her hair and she grabs my hand and begs me to remember that I too am a Jew. She knows that she is lost. But remember, she says, you see what is being done to us. That's why my wish for you is that you will survive and take revenge for our innocent blood, which will never rest" (pg. 40).

Under guard, Jewish men, women, and children board trains during deportation from Siedlce to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Besides being coerced into being a "barber," Raichman was forced to be a "dentist." He and others extracted gold-filled teeth from gassed corpses before they were flung into huge pits. The "dentists" also did other work in specialized groups. Raichman explained, "Five men worked with the white false teeth, others with metal teeth, and two specialists were occupied with sorting the metals, especially white gold, yellow gold, platinum and ordinary metal" (pg. 64).

The Nazis' diabolical agenda also forced Raichman and others to carry corpses on litters from the gas chambers to massive pits where they were stacked in an orderly manner and covered each night. Murderous guards continually whipped the men as they worked.

Raichman remembered "that every morning when we went out to work, we would notice that the surfaces of the pits had burst in dozens of places. By day the ground was firmly trodden down, but at night the blood pressed up to the surface. . . . The blood of tens of thousands of victims, unable to rest, thrust itself upward to the surface" (pg. 79). Eventually the Nazis had the bodies exhumed and burnt in massive ovens, hoping to leave no trace of their crime against God and humanity.

Alive… to bear witness

In August 1943, Raichman and a handful of other prisoners escaped Treblinka after a workers' revolt. But his troubles weren't over. Most peasants in the countryside refused to help him. Eventually, a family assisted him and he went to Piastow where a friend lived. While there, Raichman suffered a complete breakdown because he was convinced he should not have survived while others perished. But his friends tried to convince him of the fact that a few people remained to bear witness to Treblinka's wickedness.

Raichman knew they were right. He wrote, "Yes, I remained alive and find myself among free people. But I often ask myself why. Is it so that I might tell the world about the millions of innocent murdered victims, to be a witness to the innocent blood that was spilled by the hands of murderers? Yes, I remained alive to bear witness against the great slaughterhouse of Treblinka" (pg. 138).

I urge you, read and remember.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Faith and fertility

Emily Cramer

A number of years ago, in graduate school, I heard a professor use a phrase that has stuck with me as I grope along on my spiritual journey. He said that, as Christians, we are living in "the-now-and-the-not-yet"; we are the heirs of Christ's abundant life *now*, yet we are told to pray for the coming of God's kingdom which has *not yet* been established on earth. This complex description of the in-between world we inhabit teaches us to tolerate a degree of ambiguity even as we cling to truth.

At the risk of misapplying it, this phrase has also come to describe a highly specific and faith-challenging part of my life. Two years of frustration, prayer and hushed, furtive inquiries from those closest to me have lead to this dire declaration: my husband and I are reproductively impaired. Fertility challenged, if you prefer. We are – to this date – unable to have a baby. It is not, I realize, a unique predicament. Fertility clinics abound; everyone has a friend or sister or cousin who has gone through IVF, and my goodness, look at all the twins. What is unique is that now it is *me* staring into the void of infertility, now a little better equipped to sympathize. This is the in-between world of hoping for a blessing that is anything but certain.

Our situation is doubly complicated by the fact that we are not, definitively, infertile. We have been trying to have a child for nearly two years, and we don't have one yet, making us *infertile*. We have, however, had two conceptions in the past 22 months, making us at least theoretically *fertile*. Both pregnancies resulted in devastating miscarriages, creating enough hope to keep our obstetrician's platitudes somewhat genuine but not enough to have earned medical intervention. In Ontario, at least, you need to have three miscarriages to be considered anomalous.

Thoughtful friends have passed on several articles and books dealing with grief over pregnancy loss. It has been encouraging to journey with other Christians through this struggle, to know that as a Christian it is okay to acknowledge pain and grief and to mourn without clichés about happy endings. But moving past miscarriage into the intentional hope-act of "trying again" often leads to an emotion much more soul-destroying than grief – cynicism.

Baby-envy

Facebook, or at least my relationship with it, is the culprit here. I appreciate social networking as much as the next person. I am a Facebook member, and I love keeping track of friends and family members, but what have become increasingly difficult are the armies of people who have had babies in the last few years, people married long after us, people modelling photos of hugely fecund bellies in their first, then second, now even third pregnancies. Every few weeks I find another "What? *She's* had a baby? But they just got married last year!" Under it all is the eternal shriek of the six-year-old soul: "IT'S NOT FAIR!"

I know I am not alone, neither socially, nor biblically. I think of Hannah during difficult times, Hannah, the Old Testament patron saint of infertile women. I think of her end-of-the rope prayer: "Lord give me children or I DIE." And her plight turned into rich reward. Her firstborn son was Samuel, holy child, priestly leader of Israel, immortalized in the Bible. He was followed by a bundle of other kids, the ones she didn't have to give into God's service, the ones she could hover over, teach how to braid *challah*, and ensure good Jewish marriages with spouses who would never move away. But truth be told, I can't relate to Hannah. Her perseverance teaches me in other areas, but her struggle with infertility seems so foreign. There is no social stigma attached to my infertility, at least none that troubles me. Children are not, for me, an old-age insurance policy nor the secret to fulfilling my husband's masculinity. Our monogamy doesn't hinge on my ability to reproduce.

Spiritual struggle

My struggle with infertility is with God, really. Aren't children a blessing from God? Haven't I been mandated to be fruitful and to multiply? Haven't I been pre-programmed from the early days of my own conception to physically cycle through this bone-deep procreation drive? No number of proverbs about the rain falling equally can make me

is, I know I am being perfected into Christ-likeness, broken of my impatient nature, taught to cling. But this knowledge does not dull the edge of the blade in my heart that cuts as I scan Facebook, digs in when I attend baby showers, slices as I console friends frantic from rogue toddlers, pierces as I read the Bible, as I pray for patience, as I write this. This is my now-and-not-yet: holding on to faith for a baby when I don't yet know if this gift will ever be given to me. As in all faith struggles, can I tolerate the uncertainty and repeating disappointment without relinquishing faith?

As far as I can tell, I have only one tool at my disposal right now, the only tool any of us have during dark times in this half-dark kingdom: the sheer force of my will. It is the will to say that my faith will not be shaken, no matter what. If it takes five more years to have a baby, my faith will stand. If we are unable to have children, my faith will stand. If I am angry at God, still my faith will stand. Each month that cycles unfruitfully by will probably widen the sorrow, carving a canyon into me. People with babies will likely always be a mixed joy, tinged with melancholy. And I may battle anger at God for some time, maybe a long time. My will can only work today, present tense. It does not exist tomorrow, tonight, next hour, even next minute. Tomorrow it may be fits of rage, curtains on faith. But today, I will tolerate this middle kingdom, this place of breath-holding and dim vision. Today, I *will*.

Emily Cramer grew up in the Toronto area and spent most of her twenties living as a nomad. She completed her English B.A. in New Brunswick (1999), burned through some existential angst in eastern Ontario and in Scotland, and finally wrapped up a Master's in Christianity & the Arts in British Columbia (2008). She now lives in Barrie, Ontario where she works as a college Communications teacher.

COMMENT

The myth of Adam and Eve?

Bart van der Kamp

Much has been written about Adam and Eve recently, pitting the truth of the early chapters of Genesis over against recent findings of science about the size of early human populations. I want to propose a way of looking at the controversy that honours both sides.

Every culture has creation stories. On the face of it, it may seem that these are about how things came to exist, but in reality they are all about who we are, how we relate to God, to the king, to each other, to the opposite sex, and to the world around us. These creation stories fall necessarily into the category of myth. After all, no one was present to observe and record it all. Let's assume Moses was the author of Genesis. He was educated at the Egyptian court, culturally a child of his time, but also one to whom Yahweh had revealed himself. When Moses came to write the pre-history of Israel, would he not also have followed the practices of his time and told a story that is all about who we are, how we came to be the way we are now, and how our sinful inclination leads to death and a return to chaos? As is typical of creation myths, Moses's version, too, merges seamlessly with actual history, presumably gleaned from records at the Egyptian court as well as stories told in Goshen. The big difference between it and other myths, including modern secular creation myths, is that here we have an *inspired* myth. For that is how biblical inspiration works. Ancient authors wrote accounts, following the cultural practices and cosmological understandings of their time. But, at the same time, the Holy Spirit guided their writing and ensured they were collected for us, so that we, too, might understand who we are and how we came to be that way, and how we now relate to God, to each other, etc.

The nature of a "true account"

Now you may ask: But did it really happen? Are the stories of the first chapters of Genesis really true? I would respond in several ways to that question. First, these questions betray the view that *true* stories are only stories that really happened. But is that what Moses set out to do? After all, his story bears great resemblance to the Egyptian and Mesopotamian creation myths. It seems to me that Moses takes those myths, but gets them "right," so that now they do give a *true* account of who we are … but it's an account that remains in the myth category.

Second, if we start by asking those questions, and if believing the early chapters of Genesis simply means believing that they are history rather than myth, we may miss most of the meaning. So, for instance, is the snake a representation of Amon Re, the Egyptian sun god who appears as a snake on the headdress of every Pharaoh? And what about naming the animals, and about nakedness / leaves / animal skins, and so on? In myths there are no irrelevant events – all have meaning though we may no longer understand the specifics.

Thirdly, if these early chapters of Genesis are indeed inspired myths, then the attempt to interpret them, so that they are more in line with current scientific understanding of human origins, is an attempt at reconciliation that is simply not called for. It is, in fact, to say that science can improve myth.

Finally, I suspect that we may never know via scientific investigation what actually happened. A full argument would require much more space than is here available, but remember that stories based on what "actually happened," including scientific accounts, always require that the authors select from all possible facts those that they consider relevant. Now when it comes to the physical universe, we can be pretty certain that we have the right set of facts. In biology this becomes more difficult. So long as we interpret organisms as fancy biochemical machines, we can go a long way. But, to the extent that organisms and particularly humans are agents, science is at a loss to predict and explain their actions. Science does not know about good and evil. When the subject is human action, different people tell very different stories about the same events, particularly when it comes to motive and intent. The stories we tell are powerful and they shape us. Let us listen and be formed by the stories of the Spirit.

Bart van der Kamp lives in B.C. and is an elder in the Ladner CRC. He has retired from UBC after 40 years of teaching and research in Forest Biology.

Columns

My Window Seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

Momentum Choir's got talent

Nearly every Tim Hortons, Walmart and movie theatre that you visit are barrier-free. If you are able to walk into your local coffee shop, there are no barriers for you to get into the building. This hasn't always been the case for those who are in a wheelchair. Over the last 20 years, the world has become much more inclusive and accessible. In 2005, Ontario, the province in which I live, introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to implement "measures, policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises or such other things as may be prescribed, and for the prevention of the erection of such barriers" for those with a disability. Saying it a different way, if you are in a wheelchair you can now most likely visit any grocery store, restaurant or ride public transit with no or very little difficulty. Although it is wonderful news that our society has come this far, we still have a way to go. And I am trying to lead the charge.

Momentum choir

I am the originator, Executive and Artistic Director of Momentum Choir. We are a choir of 48 unique artists, all musicians who happen to have an intellectual disability. Momentum started as an idea in 2004, when I approached the Ontario Government for a grant to start up a regional choir in Niagara. We received every penny we asked for, $51,000 over three years. We are now in our 5th year and although we experience the same funding worries as other not-for-profit organizations, we are going strong. We have performed for over 10,000 people and each performance is inspiring. We are artists, *real* artists. We rehearse every Tuesday from September to May. I constantly remind the singers how a professional choir behaves. I push the musicians to where I believe they can go. And they can go far, sometimes farther than they or their family think. I received an e-mail from a mother of a singer who wrote "Thanks for taking us somewhere we never dreamed of going." That is goosebump stuff.

Momentum's team of dedicated employees and volunteers have been trying to break barriers in the Niagara arts scene by proving that we belong, not just for the sake of inclusivity but on our merits. So I thought we should try to take our talents to a national stage.

Canada's Got Talent is a reality television series set to debut in March 2012 on Citytv Television Network. The Got Talent franchise began in Britain and is now in 39 countries. It is a national contest where you audition before a group of television producers, and they decide if you are worthy of the next round of auditions before a panel of celebrity judges. Each round eliminates an artist or group of artists until there is a winner crowned.

Our audition

The Momentum Choir recently auditioned for Canada's Got Talent in Toronto. We applied and had each member sign all 19 pages of the consent form. There were consent forms for teachers, those bringing minors, and even union employees. What they did not have was a form for Substitute Decision Makers, which shows that after going to 39 countries around the world they haven't encountered a group like Momentum. Many of our choir members are unable to make their own decisions, and have a government approved person to sign on their behalf.

Our audition time was 8 am, which meant we needed to leave Niagara at 5:30 in the morning. We looked impressive. We walked into the Roger's Centre (where the Toronto Blue Jays and Toronto Argonauts play) and did our best to prove we belonged. We spoke with other hopefuls, mostly solo or small group singers with a guitar and talent. We carried ourselves in a professional manner.

Members of the Momentum Choir during their "Canada's Got Talent" audition.

We knew we belonged. Our audition, *Lean On Me,* a classic song normally sung in four minutes plus, needed to be condensed into two minutes or less. We were nervous, but excited. Just before our audition, an outspoken member of the choir told the producer that "we've never been to Toronto to do anything like this before." Unfiltered and honest.

By the time you read this column, we'll know whether or not we get to continue on the show. As I've told the choir, I fully expect to get a call back. I suggested that they get ready to sing for the world.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the director of the Music Therapy Program at Bethesda He lives near St. Catharines, Ontario.

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

Apple and aesthetics

Apple products have inspired many devoted fans, and the iconic logo of a stylized Apple with a bite out of it has become one of the world's top brands. Many people paused to pay their respects to Steve Jobs, co-founder of the Apple Computer company who passed away in early October. Impromptu memorials appeared in front of Apple stores where people left messages, many expressing a sense that Steve Jobs had changed the world.

The Apple computer company had modest roots. Steve Jobs dropped out of college, a decision he shares with other successful computer entrepreneurs like Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and Bill Gates of Microsoft (a pathway I don't normally recommend for my own students). Steve Jobs eventually met up with the "other Steve," Steve Wozniak, who designed the hardware and operating system for the original Apple computer. Together they formed the Apple Computer Company in 1976, working out of Jobs' family garage. From there the company quickly grew with its popular Apple II personal computer. Out of nostalgia, I have kept a dusty but working Apple II+ compatible computer under my basement stairs, a relic from the early days of personal computers.

In the 1990s Apple moved away from the bland beige box that defined the original Apple computer to a series of stylish new products. The new iMac was introduced in fun candy-coloured cases and sales began to climb. The iPod, with its iconic white cord and earbuds, launched Apple into consumer electronics. Later, the introduction of the chic iPhone merged the cell phone and music player with an internet access device. More recently the svelte iPad was introduced, a device somewhere between a smartphone and a laptop which we didn't even know we needed. Each of these new products was launched by Steve Jobs, dressed in his signature black turtleneck and blue jeans showcasing each new product to an eager audience of fans.

These products are not without their issues. Personal electronic devices can isolate us from our immediate surroundings and are a source of distraction. The rapid obsolescence of devices has exasperated the e-waste problem (there has been a new iPhone released for each of the past 4 years). We are bombarded by glitzy marketing campaigns, and people camp out in front of Apple stores to be the first when a new product is released. Certain devices have become associated with success and status. There is much to critique.

However, this does not take away from the fact that many Apple products are examples of good design that takes into consideration *aesthetic norms*. The aesthetic norm deals with the notion of delightful harmony. In his book *Art in Action*, Nicholas Wolterstorff considers the example of a spade and suggests that a spade serves its purposes well if it consists of two things: first, it must be good for digging holes; but second, it should be satisfying to use for this purpose. The area of human-computer interaction (HCI) is concerned with making the interface between humans and computers, like Wolterstorff's spade, "good and satisfying to use." Apple products have not only been functional, but elegant and intuitive to use. In 1984, when PC's were still running clunky command-line interfaces, the Apple Macintosh emerged with a mouse and a graphical user interface. Later, the iPod featured a novel click wheel, and the iPhone brought an intuitive touch screen interface. Computer manufacturers can learn from Apple, and many have mimicked their products and designs.

Donald Norman, a former vice-president at Apple, wrote a book called "*The Design of Everyday Things*." In this book he looks at the design of things ranging from telephones to faucets and light switches. Using doors as one example, he explains how the design should provide intuitive cues signalling whether a door must be pushed, pulled, or slid open. Have you ever walked up to a door and tried pushing, only to discover it needed to be pulled? The problem is not you, but a poor design giving improper cues. If simple things like a door need a sign like "push" or "pull," the design has failed. A good design links aesthetics and usability. A classic example of poor interface design is the time-setting feature on old videocassette recorders (VCRs). For years a flashing "12:00" was a common sight on VCR displays in many homes.

Under Steve Jobs, Apple become highly profitable. But the motivation to strive for good design should not be limited to making a profit. Good designs are a concrete way to show care for customers and users. Christian engineers and computer scientists can concretely show love for their neighbours by keeping aesthetics and usability in mind when designing new products, whether they be doors or digital devices.

Dr. Derek Schuurman is a computer science professor at Redeemer University College. He is annoyed by doors with vertical handles that suggest "pull" when they actually need to be pushed.

Columns

The Public Square

Harry Antonides

Ahmadinejad's blueprint for a new world order

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pleaded his case before the world at the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2011. Some of what he said sounded promising, but can Ahmadinejab be trusted?

The case for Iran

Ahmadinejad started off by saying that there is an urgent need for fundamental changes in the international order. He believes that such changes must be based on the recognition that some people are divinely gifted to provide leadership. Such leaders, he says, must be guided by compassion, generosity, justice, integrity and liberty in order to satisfy men's desire for happiness, prosperity and security; all of this in keeping with the God-given dignity of humankind.

He followed up with a long list of things that are wrong in the world despite the historical achievements of the UN. He laments the evils of war, mass-murder, poverty, political crises, slavery, colonialism, military dictatorship, Zionism and the oppression of the Palestinian people. The entire list was much longer, but you get the point.

Ahmadinejad said that the same slave masters and colonial powers that instigated two world wars now have caused widespread misery and disorder. The powerful – read the U.S and the West – have become rich by impoverishing the rest of the world "through imposing poverty, humiliation and annihilation to others." So what is to be done, according to the President of Iran?

Ahmadinejad called for collective cooperation because "freedom, justice, dignity, wellbeing and lasting security are the rights of all nations." He insisted that the "shared and collective management of the world" must take place under the "leadership of Imam al-Mahdi, the Ultimate Savior of mankind and the inheritor of all divine messengers and leaders and to the pure generation of our great Prophet." He assured us that in this way the "creation of a supreme and ideal society … is the guaranteed promise of Allah."

He concluded: "The world is now witnessing more than ever, the widespread awakening in Islamic lands, in Asia, Europe and America … Our great nation stands ready to join hands with other nations to march on this beautiful path in harmony and in line with the shared aspirations of mankind." What to make of this speech?

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the United Nations General Assembly.

The case against Iran

1. The first thing to note is that Ahmadinejad is using words such as freedom and justice, etc., that all people of goodwill also favour. The problem is that he is borrowing these terms to fool his audience into thinking that he, too, is a person of goodwill. The reality is very different because his frame of reference is one in which those terms have a very different meaning from what most of us would think. For instance, what he means by the words "freedom" and "peace" are situations where Allah is the supreme ruler and Islamic law (sharia) is the supreme law for individuals and society.

2. The contradiction between Ahmadinejad's words and the reality of life in Iran under Islamic law is stark. Fundamental to his version of Islam is the idea that it is more than a religion, because the mosque and state are merged. This makes Islam a political ideology that controls every aspect of life. The result is that there is no development of a free, civil infrastructure and no flourishing of economic, scientific and industrial development. Backwardness and poverty are rampant. (See the annual *UN Arab Human Development Report,* beginning in 2002.) There is no freedom of any kind and leaving Islam is a capital offence. All attempts to create a more free society have been ruthlessly suppressed since the revolution of 1979. (See Paul Marshall, "Ahmadinejad Arrives in New York on a Wave of Religious Repression," www.nationalreview.com, Sept. 19, 2011.)

3. In belabouring the problems, injustices and oppression in the world, Ahmadinejad was quick to lay the blame for these conditions on the prevailing international order. Though choosing his words carefully and ambiguously, he left no doubt about his conviction that the U.S. and Israel are the main culprits. Who can forget his threat to "wipe Israel off the map," and Iran's declaration of war against the U.S.? How can he square those with his fine-sounding words about a harmonious new world order?

4. Ahmadinejad's call for global governance must be seen in the context of his claim that some are divinely gifted for "dominance and superiority." Furthermore, his statement about the need for global management under the "leadership of Imam al-Mahdi, the ultimate Saviour of mankind" who will assure the "creation of a supreme and ideal society" is a telling reflection of Islamic supremacism. But how can an ideal society be established by a tyrannical ideology cloaked in a religion that preaches hatred toward all infidels, and especially toward Jews? It can't be done, and won't be done.

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien

Irrigating a desert but drying up a river

This past September I went to the Imperial Valley in southern California to see desert agriculture at its best and to see, and understand, how irrigation can drain a mighty river – the Colorado River.

My wife, sister-in-law, (our driver of the rented car) and I enjoyed touring Southern California for 20 days, often staying at ocean beachfront resorts.

Imperial County is located near the Mexico and Arizona borders. It's a small desert-like county but mighty in agricultural production – the gross production last year was valued at $1.6 billion. The county has 115,000 acres of vegetables worth $809 million and has the largest alfalfa-growing region in the world.

Last year almost 1.5 million tons of hay was produced in Imperial County. I have never seen so much hay stacked up in long rows in fields everywhere. Most of the hay is under tarps to protect it from the scorching sun. They're all rectangular bales, either 100-pound bales tied with three strands of sisal twine, or the very large bales. You do not see round bales or plastic wrapped bales. What it so truly amazing about the hay crop is that it's grown in a desert that never gets more than three inches of rain a year. Summers are extremely hot with daily temperatures of 104–115 degrees F. The days we criss-crossed the area it was 106.

In the early 1900s the region was a barren desert, but developers saw that the Colorado River could be diverted to supply irrigation water. The 1,450 mile long Colorado River is the primary river in the American Southwest, draining somewhere around 242,000 square miles of land from the states of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California.

All-American Canal

The All-American Canal is an 80-mile long canal located in southwestern California. It was built in the 1930s and conveys water from the Colorado River into the Imperial Valley and to nine cities. It is the valley's only water source. Six smaller canals branching off the All-American Canal move water into the valley. The water distribution system includes over 1,400 miles of canals and 1,100 miles of pipeline. These canal systems irrigate up to 630,000 acres of cropland. The All-American Canal is the largest canal in the world, carrying a maximum of 26,155 cubic feet per second. Almost 90 percent of all water diverted from the Colorado River is for irrigation purposes, and most of the water is delivered by gravity as the valley is tilted slightly to the north.

Water for irrigation is everywhere in Imperial County, often transported in little concrete-lined canals running along roadways in front of fields. Farmers use surface irrigation, also known as flood or furrow irrigation, rather than the sprinkler system. Flood irrigation uses gravity to transport water, and since water flows downhill the fields are slightly sloped. I watched farm workers level and build-up headlands around a field using a road grader, and huge tractors are used to level and furrow fields of sandy soil. They obviously use laser beams to ridge and pack the dry soil before planting the vegetable crops. After planting, water from the small canal in front of the field floods the small trenches (which can be done in different ways) and flows to the end of the field. I took photos of fields being flooded this way in 106 degree heat. I also bagged up a bit of the sandy lumpy soil. The lumps are as hard as rock.

Furrow irrigation in Imperial County .

Lettuce is tops

Some of the 2010 agricultural statistics I picked up at the El Centro Chamber of Commerce are startling. Imperial County has 136,815 acres in alfalfa hay. Their average yield is 7.95 ton per acre and it's valued at $118.81 a ton. I saw a lot of sudangrass growing and being harvested. They have 59,403 acres; yield is 5.93 ton/acre with a value of $132.29 a ton. Much of the hay is exported. That's incredible production for a region that is essentially a desert.

The top three commodities in Imperial County are: lettuce ($291 million), cattle ($268 million) and alfalfa ($129 million). We visited a feedlot in the valley that has 33,000 head of cattle on feed. This is small compared to the Harris Ranch feedlot we visited in the San Joaquin Valley, which has somewhere around 110,000 cattle in one 800-acre feedlot.

Water from the Colorado River is a lifeline for every living thing in the valley. For much of the year nothing flows out into the Gulf of California. You have to see it to believe it!

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew-area farmer and agriculture writer. He and his wife toured California last year but didn't see the southern part of the state.

Classifieds

Birthdays

December 9, 2011 - **Geerlof Bomhof** - 90th Birthday

With thankfulness to the Lord for his goodness and faithfulness, we hereby wish our Dad a very **Happy 90th Birthday**.

From his wife, Riet (Koetsier) and his eight children:
Gary (JoAnn Boersma); Elsie Biersteker (Robert);
Margaret Struik (John); Arie (Margaret Vriend);
Inkie Olivier (Fred); John (Laurie Barclay);
Rick (Christine Van Dorp); Tom (Jodie Pereboom);
28 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren.
Psalm 84.

Correspondence: 6 - 8997 160th Street, Surrey BC V4N 2X7

It is with much gratitude to our Lord
that we as a family,
hope to celebrate DV
the 80th Birthday of

Trish Bouwma (nee **Buma**)

on November 11, 2011.

May He continue to bless and keep you!

With much love from your husband,
Richard Bouwma
and children:
Liz & Dick DeVries, Nanticoke ON
Helen & Jim MacAlpine, Caledonia ON
George & Sandra (deceased) Bouwma, Delhi ON
Linda & Tom Bree, Kitchener ON
Kathleen & Harrison Mungal, Bolton ON
Also with love from your 23 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

Home address: Richard & Trish Bouwma, 7 Marley Cr.
Jarvis ON N0A 1L0

"Birthdays are good for you. Statistics show that the people who have the most, live the longest." Rev. Larry Lorenzoni

Send all family announcements to rose@christiancourier.ca
NEW! You can also send and upload files on-line at
christiancourier.ca

Obituaries

Elbert Walter

of Moorefield
peacefully, surrounded by his wife,
children, grandchildren, and brother,
passed away to be with his Lord after a courageous battle
with deteriorating health throughout the past few years.

Beloved husband of Dicky (de Waal) Walter for 55 years.
Dear father of
Bep and Jake Vandenberg
and Jim and Liz Walter all of Moorefield,
Loving Opa and Great Opa of
David and Rachel Vandenberg,
Mikayla, Kiersten, Brooklyn and Tyler;
Mark Vandenberg (2000);
Melissa and Cody Gleeson and Kylie;
Bob and Jenn Walter, Austin and Hailey;
Katrina and Greg Schnieders, Madison and Milliscent.
Fondly remembered by his brother John VanDriel of Moorefield,
Brother-in law Sidney and Janet deWaal of New Mexico
as well as many friends.
Elbert was born in Leerdam, Holland on November 2, 1934 and immigrated to Canada with his wife Dicky and family in 1972, when they began a new life of farming in Maryborough Township. Elbert was a past board member at Peel and Maryborough Insurance and volunteered on the Board of Directors for both the Palmerston Hospital and Conestoga Crest. He was a former member of the Drayton Rotary Club and had a true passion for playing the organ.
Elbert was a man loved and respected by many.

The family received friends at the Drayton Christian Reformed Church on Wednesday, October 5, 2011.
Rev. Albert Dreise conducted the Funeral Service in the Drayton CRC on Thursday, October 6, 2011 at 11:00 a.m.
Interment Drayton Cemetery.
As expressions of sympathy donations to the Covenant House or the Palmerston Hospital Foundation would be appreciated by the family. Arrangements entrusted to Heritage Funeral Homes, Drayton, 519-638-3072.

Family contact is: Dicky Walter, RR 2, Moorefield ON N0G 2K0

I have loved you with an everlasting love. Jeremiah 31:3

Janice Marie Cooper

child of God, went home to be with her heavenly Father
on Sunday, October 9, 2011, at the age of 80.

Janice was born in Celeryville, Ohio, on October 6, 1931 to Nick and Jenny Moll, one of eleven siblings. She earned her teaching degree at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she met her lifelong partner, Sidney Cooper. Sidney and Janice spent their lives in ministry for the Lord, serving in a number of locations around the world. Janice was a gentle, tenderhearted, yet strong and devoted woman whose willingness to serve was always evident. Janice thrived on being in relationship with her Saviour and with her family. She loved singing and making music to the Lord and could often be found playing her piano. She was an avid reader and appreciated the challenge of a crossword puzzle. She enjoyed the beauty of God's creation and treasured the adventure of travel.

Janice is survived by her beloved husband, Sidney Cooper, who she married on August 7, 1952; they were partners in love and life for over 60 years. Janice was the loving and devoted mother of Kathy (Louis) Drapac, Sara (Ted) Stelpstra, Beth (Ken) Mulder, Ross (Sandy) Cooper, Todd (Ingrid) Cooper and Andy (Cheryl) Cooper. Janice will always be the cherished grandmother of 16 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Janice was surrounded by her husband and children as she entered into glory. What a wonderful assurance we have to know that she is now in the presence of the Lord.

Correspondence: Rev. Sidney Cooper
214 -1285 Sandy Lane, Sarnia ON N7V 4J7
or sjcooper@rivernet.net

Hans Nusselder

June 4, 1934 — October 17, 2011
Beilen, the Netherlands — Kitchener, Ontario

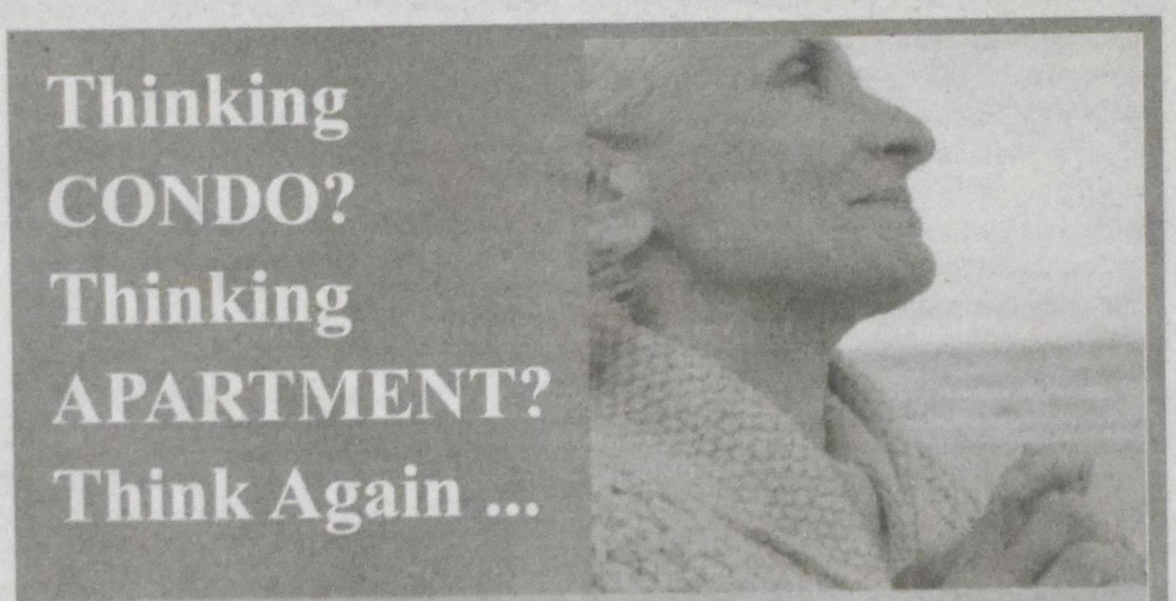
Hans Nusselder passed away peacefully at Freeport Health Centre of Grand River Hospital after a long battle with cancer.
We grieve not as those who have no hope for we know that Hans is at home now with his Lord, where he longed to go.

Beloved husband of
Stien Nusselder (deHaan) for 53 years.

Beloved father to: Helen and Mike Plaisier
and Phil and Annette Nusselder.
Devoted Pake to Christina, Peter, Julie, Matthew, Connor and Nicole.
Cherished brother of Jo (Berend) DeVries, Wim (Hilda) Nusselder, and Anne (Gord) Pols. Dear brother-in-law of Lippe (Ena) deHaan, Trynie (George) Mackowski, Bob (Trudy) deHaan, Harold (Betty) deHaan, and Rolina (Hank) Hultink.

Hans was a former active member of Community Christian Reformed Church, Kitchener, and more recently a member of the Riverside Associate Reform Presbyterian Church, Cambridge. His friendliness, devotion to family, active involvement in church and sports related activities, and strong testimony of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness will be missed by many.

Condolences: Stien Nusselder, 1257 Ottawa St S, Kitchener ON N2E 1L9



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Welkom

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Rev. Ralph Koops will
be preaching.
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Ottewell CRC,
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of God's grace and faithfulness

February 18-20, 2012.

We hereby invite friends and past members to attend.
For more information visit:
www.ottewellchurch.com
or email: ottewell@telusplanet.net

Stratford Christian Reformed Church
Stratford Ontario Canada,
is planning to celebrate **60 years**
of God's goodness and faithfulness.
All friends and former members are invited to attend a special service to commemorate this occasion with us on **November 20, 2011** at 9:30.
www.stratfordcrc.org

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Advertising /Jobs

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is a small church with a big heart in an historic university city of 117,000 on the shores of Lake Ontario. We are seeking a pastor who relates well to all ages, and will help us grow as a church through using his or her gifts of empowering leadership, engaging preaching and effective worship planning. The new pastor will help renew our educational ministry and will support our efforts to reach out to our community.
For further information, or to submit a pastoral profile please email
admin@wfcrc.ca

Ottawa Christian Reformed Campus Chaplaincy seeks to hire a

full-time campus chaplain

to establish a new campus ministry on the bilingual campus of the University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Ontario.

The successful candidate is committed to the Reformed faith, self motivated, has advanced academic and/or professional degrees; has experience working pastorally with young adults; relates well to religious and ethnically diverse groups on and around campus; can nurture healthy relationships with volunteer campus ministry workers from other denominations and faiths; and, is able to be an incarnational presence in both the academic and wider communities. Preference will be given to candidates who are bilingual (French/English).

Interested applicants should send a letter of application, resume, the names and contact information for three references, and a brief vision for campus ministry to

Prof. Larry Vandergrift, Chair of the Search Committee,
937 Alpine Ave., Ottawa, ON Canada, K2B 5R9.

A job description is available upon request. For more information please contact: **lvdgrift@uottawa.ca**. *Deadline for applications is December 31, 2011.*

Principal/COO

Thunder Bay Christian School

Thunder Bay Christian School, situated in scenic Northwestern Ontario, is seeking applications for a full-time Principal. The City of Thunder Bay, with a population of over 122,000 people, is located on the north shore of Lake Superior and surrounded by the beauty of mountains, lakes, and forests which allow for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Thunder Bay Christian School currently has 104 students from JK to Grade 10 and will be celebrating their 50th anniversary in the fall of 2012. Information about TBCS is available at **www.tbaychristianschool.ca**.

The new Principal will be required to provide leadership and direction as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the school. This means that the ideal candidate must have strong leadership, communication, educational and organizational skills. He or she must be able to use these skills to successfully revitalize, evaluate, and encourage an experienced staff to work as a team with the unified purpose of instructing students to grow spiritually and academically. The successful candidate will have a sincere and active faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and be committed to a reformed Christian world view. Some classroom teaching will also be required. Preference will be given to candidates who hold or are progressing towards a Christian School Principal Certificate.

Interested applicants should forward a cover letter, resume, statement of faith and a statement of their philosophy of Christian education which includes their vision for Christian educational leadership.
Please send this by e-mail to agysen.tbcs@gmail.com or by mail to Angela Gysen, TBCS Principal Search Committee, R.R. #2, Site 12-36, Thunder Bay, ON, P7C 4V1.

The deadline for applications is January 9, 2012. Contract begins August 1, 2012.

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Kingston Christian School: Principal

Kingston Christian School seeks an enthusiastic, faith-filled principal. KCS is blessed with a growing preschool plus full-time JK/SK to Gr. 8 student body of 142, a dedicated, long-term caring staff of 12 and a very strong community feel amongst its families. Our school is a living, breathing example of the Body of Christ as our families and staff represents 19 churches in the Kingston, ON area. KCS has a vibrant Visual Arts, Music and Drama program.
Our new principal will be able to quickly understand the pulse of KCS and provide leadership that fits our organizational culture. S/he will:

- Have a sincere faith relationship with Jesus Christ and actively participate in a home church
- Have a strong biblical worldview in education and a vision for creatively leading Kingston Christian School
- Understand the increasingly rigorous educational requirements established by the Ministry of Education and be able to give guidance to the professional development of our staff in the most current curricular and pedagogical expectations and best practices
- Be an astute administrator, decision- maker and communicator who is able to build cohesion in a diverse Christian school community including staff, students, parents, board members, supporters and volunteers
- Be a collaborative mentor for staff who affirms, motivates and challenges
- Cultivate existing leadership strengths, abilities and aspirations of the KCS staff
- Have previous experience shaping policies and procedures relevant to the effective administration of a school and report, consult and advise the board on these and other relevant matters
- Celebrate the opportunity to work in and nurture a healthy Christian community that fosters the full potential of students to grow spiritually and academically
- Love promoting Christian education and KCS to potential new families and supporters

Qualifications:

- 10+ years of teaching experience in a variety of elementary grades (preferably in a Christian School) required
- Bachelors degree and valid teaching certificate required
- Principal certification preferred (or willingness to complete the process)

This is a definite, full-time administrative position with 30% teaching responsibilities for a three-year initial term, reviewed annually.

Please send a complete resume – highlighting relevant leadership, administrative and educational experience – plus a statement of faith, philosophy of education and, vision for leadership by *November 30th* to **KCSPrincipalSearch@gmail.com**. Confidential inquiries can be directed to one of the Principal Search Committee Co-Chairs (Chris Doering and Louise Luchuk) at this email address.

Please visit **www.kingstonchristianschool.ca** for:

- A complete job description
- Information about Kingston Christian School and Kingston, ON

Orillia Christian School

is prayerfully seeking an individual to fill the position of

Principal

under the COO Principal's model. The successful candidate will be the educational team leader and be able to affirm, motivate and challenge staff members; the principal will be an effective communicator and an integral part of board management in order to fulfil the mission and vision of the school. The successful candidate will hold an Ontario Principal's Certificate and an Ontario Teaching Certificate. A Christian School Principal's Certificate and/or a Christian School Teaching Certificate would be a definite asset. This position is based on 50% administration time and 50% teaching time. This is a definite, full time position with benefits. The City of Orillia can be found nestled in the heart of Ontario's Lake Country. We are very fortunate to be located on the shores of two beautiful and plentiful natural resources, Lake Simcoe and LakeCouchiching. We are approximately 129 km north of Toronto.

The start date for this position is September 1, 2012.
The deadline for application is Friday November 25, 2011.

Contact Information:
Christa Nancekievill, Board Chair
dnance@sympatico.ca
371 Grenville Ave., Orillia, ON L3V 7P5

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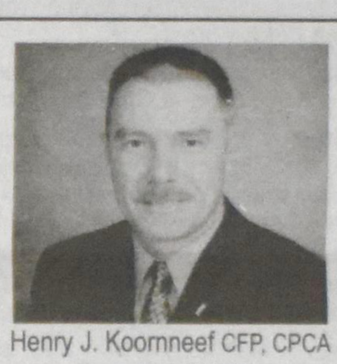

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GEORGETOWN BACH CHORALE –Messiah

The Georgetown Bach Chorale has been presented with a rare opportunity. Due to the size and character of the group, this tightly knit ensemble has the good fortune to hand pick their performing venues to suit the programmes they wish to present. Therefore, the four concerts The Chorale will be offering take place in four very different structures. The first, taking place on Friday, November 18th 8 pm, is in Christ Church Anglican in Brampton, a building with pristine white walls and shiny hardwood floors. It sounds and appears acoustically perfect! St. James Anglican Church in Caledon East offers a more intimate setting, audience members being surrounded by gorgeous stained glass and a cozy atmosphere. This performance takes place at 3 pm on Sunday, November 20th.Two weeks later, the Georgetown Bach Chorale travels over to Acton to perform in the newly renovated "Old Town Hall" at Willow and Bower Streets in Old Down Town Acton. This venue is very similar to the setting in which Handel premiered his beloved Oratorio -a theatre setting. The performance takes place on Saturday, December 3rd at 8 pm. The Chorale's final performance is at St. Elias Ukrainian Catholic Church east of Georgetown (10193 Heritage Road). Performance time is 2:30 pm. This incredible wooden structure, situated by itself in the middle of a lonely field, has overwhelmed audience goers for the past two years with its stunning Byzantine art work, breathtaking sonority, and incomparable atmosphere. It is truly a rare miniature cathedral. It should be noted that this venue has sold out early in the past so get your tickets ahead of time. It is unlikely that tickets will be available at the door. Avoid disappointment. Tickets for all events are priced at $30.00 for general admission; $10.00 for students.

See Calendar of Events

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 13 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaste**r Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching. DVDs available.

Nov 18 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm Christ Church Anglican, 4 Elizabeth Street North, **Brampton** $30, Students $10

Nov 20 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah 8 pm St. James Anglican Church, **Caledon East. Information is on our** website www.georgetownbachchorale.com

Nov 20 CRC of **Stratford**, Ontario 60 year celebration. More information to come or at **stratfordcrc.org**

Nov 23 The Martin Mans Formation, Church of the Epiphany, 560 Dundas St., **Woodstock** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com

Nov 24 Musica Sacra Chorus & The Martin Mans Formation, Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com

Nov 25 Sacred Harmonies from around the World. Knox Presbyterian Church, 58 Riddell St., **Woodstock**. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com

Nov 26 A Celebration of Choral Classics, The Sanderson Centre for the Arts, 88 Dalhousie St., **Brandford** 8 pm. Info & tickets at: musicasacrachorus.com

Dec 3 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 8 pm Old Town Hall, Willow and Bower Streets, **Acton.** Information is on our website www.georgetownbachchorale.com

Dec 3 Baroque performance of Handel's Messiah, Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church, **Jordan**, Ont. 7:30 pm.

Dec 4 The Bach Chorale Handel's Messiah at 2:30 pm St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 10193 Heritage Rd, **Brampton.** Website: georgetownbachchorale.com

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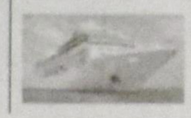

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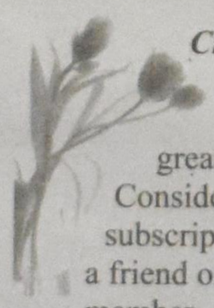

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MUSICA SACRA CHORUS & THE MARTIN MANS FORMATION
Voices in Tandem
Thursday November 24, 8 pm
Mountainview Christian Ref. Church
290 Main St W, Grimsby

Sacred Harmonies from around the World
Friday November 25, 8 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church
59 Riddell St, Woodstock

A Celebration of Choral Classics
Saturday November 26, 8 pm
The Sanderson Centre for the Arts
88 Dalhousie St, Brantford

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A different kind of remembering

Emily Wierenga

We pin poppies because the blood-stained flower bloomed in some of Flanders' worst battlefields, and this pinning helps us to remember. The blood spilt by sons and fathers and grandfathers. The soil our ancestors bought with their lives. The freedom which wakes us each morning, the freedom which wraps arms around our boys, our men.

Poppy Day, Armstice Day, Veterans Day or Remembrance Day – 24 hours dedicated to all those in the armed forces who have died on duty since the First World War. Recognized in Commonwealth countries, the event occurs on November 11 to acknowledge the conclusion of WWI at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.

But there are many for whom war still rages. Thousands who rise each morning to fight poverty, men, women and children in bondage to the sex trade, drugs, human trafficking or child labour. Where are their poppies? Where is their ceremony? It is easy to believe we have been set free, but this is a concept which only the middle and upper class can afford.

"Human Trafficking is in every community in Canada and if you aren't seeing it, you aren't looking for it," says Miss Canada 2011 and humanitarian Tara Teng.

As a child, Teng used to read novels about the Transatlantic slave trade between Africa and the United States and the Underground Railroad journey to freedom in Canada.

"Over time the novels turned into newspaper articles and it was as if God was putting the cause of the slaves directly in my path," the 23-year-old recalls. "I would turn on the television and there would be a documentary about the oppression and exploitation of forced labour or forced prostitution. I didn't go looking for the stories of modern day slavery, but rather I feel as though the cry of the slaves found me."

It's a cry that can be heard daily – a cry that doesn't just sound from the underbelly of the third world, but in our own backyards: in the chairs of our soup kitchens and on the street-corners of our inner cities. Poverty creates thousands of casualties each week. These are the nameless souls, the forgotten soldiers, for whom no bells toll. These are the veterans for whom we should be pinning poppies the other 364 days of the year.

According to Kevin Bales, worldwide human trafficking expert and President of Free the Slaves, approximately 27 million people in the world are currently living in modern day slavery. "There are more slaves living in the world today that at any other point in time of human history!" says Teng.

These slaves, or soldiers in their own battle against poverty, are those being exploited daily by Google, Nike, Walmart and Starbucks. They're the young girls being sold into prostitution in all of Canada's major cities. They're the little boys found in Vancouver doing tricks for a meal. They're the families in China who cannot afford to send their children to school for the low wages they're paid to make our iPods. They're the children in Thailand who support their families by making the clothes we buy in Wal-mart. The daily battles these people fight generate $31.6 million dollars each year for these corporations, and it's only getting worse.

We need to rise up in this fight against injustice, to add our voices to the throng clamouring for freedom. To help the world to hear the plaintive cries of children with dark circles under their eyes, of the mothers who sell themselves in order to feed their babies and of the fathers who sell drugs in order to pay rent.

"Setting captives free was Jesus' ministry!" says Teng, who calls herself a modern-day abolitionist. "He came to bring salvation, proclaim freedom and give us life and life to the full! If we are to become like Jesus then we need to set people free from the bonds of slavery, both physical and spiritual."

Let's not take our freedom for granted. As we remember the soldiers who lost their lives in our nation's wars, let's also take time to honour those who struggle and die daily so we can wear clothes and listen to iTunes and run in padded soles. Let's pin poppies year-round so that these soldiers on the front lines of poverty and exploitation might live to see another day.

"As Canadians we have the moral responsibility to use our freedom to advocate for the freedoms of others," says Teng. "As Christians, we have been called by God to fight for the freedom of his people."

Emily Wierenga is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives in Neerlandia, AB. For more information, please visit ***emilywierenga.com****.*

George Langbroek comments on his 9/11-inspired collage,

"Everything Has a Crack In It – That's How the Light Gets In" (re: Leonard Cohen)

The work is divided into three sections. The left side shows images from the media of the reactions of people running away when the towers were coming down, as well as pictures of the towers on fire. The right side deals with the immediate aftermath, showing the firefighters and citizens helping those coming out of the buildings. Concern for others is foremost on their minds, and self-giving to others is part of that light that comes through the crack. The showing of empathy to others and the coming together of people of varying races and cultures are instances of light that God made shine through this horrific event. The centre section from the top shows the image of a cathedral that is split down the middle, and the split (crack) ends at the image of a crucifix. To the left of the cross is a person laying down a heavy bag (troubles) and going behind the cross, standing up and walking in confidence into the light. This was made real by the prayer fence that was erected on the site, see lower right side of the collage. The picture as a whole is arranged as if it is being split apart from the middle (to let more light out).

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